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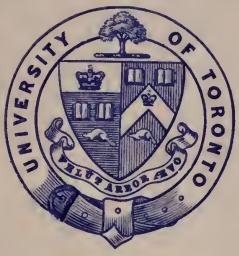


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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

# WILLIAM WORDSWORTH:

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH,

WITH

SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS IN POETRY AND PROSE.

BY

ANDREW JAMES SYMINGTON,
F. R. S. N. A.

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# PREFACE.

In preparing this Work, our aim has been to lead those, into whose hands it may fall, to read and enjoy the Poems and Prose writings of Wordsworth—the great Poet-teacher of the Century.

Wordsworth's thoughts—pervaded by a thoroughly healthy and elevating tone, because he earnestly desired to make mankind wiser, better, and happier—are expressed in language remarkable for directness, idiomatic strength, grace, and simplicity; in short, they exhibit the English tongue in perfection.

We have endeavoured to show, that his Poetry—investing Nature with spirit-meaning and moral significance—of which the human heart possesses the master-key—is essentially characterized by truth and ideality, sublimity and pathos, depth and delicacy, by unfading freshness and an entire purity.

Wordsworth's Prose writings, consisting of three closely printed 8vo volumes, were only for the first time collected and published in 1876. The collection was made by the poet's oft expressed desire, and was edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart. These three volumes are of great and permanent value, in regard to matter and manner. "Both the

extent and importance of his prose writings," as Dr. Grosart remarks, "will be a surprise to many." They treat of Education, Social Science, Political Movements, Literary Criticism, &c.

Breathing the same spirit, his poetry and his prose mutually elucidate each other. First to last, Wordsworth was pre-eminently the friend of the poor, and of the humbler orders of society. With a fine eye for the beauty of the material world, he also fixed his imagination on the elementary feelings, which are the same in all classes, and drew out the beauty that lies in what is truly natural in human life.

The views which he advanced on educational, social, and political subjects—founded on FIRST PRINCIPLES—were widened, deepened, and rendered serviceable for all time, by becoming wisely conservative, and more surely progressive. Thus, Wordsworth sought to recognize all that was best, socially and politically, in both aristocrat and democrat.

So intensely was he interested in the public questions of the day, which he had carefully studied in their important bearings, that he would sometimes walk several miles along a country road, at two o'clock in the morning, in order to meet the carrier bringing his newspaper from Keswick!

To Dr. Orville Dewy, of Boston, Wordsworth once said—that "Although he was known to the world only as a poet, he had given twelve hours' thought to the condition and prospects of society, for one to poetry."

In Wordsworth, the young will find a dewy morning freshness, bright with hope and joy—

> "Thoughts
> Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown
> And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves;"

while the middle-aged or old, if weary in heart, will at eventide also find in his poems "a healing power," which will enable them gratefully to apply to the Minstrel himself these lines, originally addressed to a skylark,—

> "Alas! my journey, rugged and uneven,
> Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind,
> But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
> As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
> I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
> And hope for higher raptures when Life's day is done."

While commending the benign influence of this great teacher, we have also tried to convey an idea of his habitual traits of thought and feeling, his manner of life, personal appearance, and surroundings.

Some facts are taken from the "Memoirs" of the Poet, by his nephew the Bishop of Lincoln; more are gleaned from Wordsworth's own writings, and from other sources.

Many of the *Poems* are, directly or indirectly, autobiographical; while the *Prose* works include the Notes on his poems, taken down by Miss Isabella Fenwick from Wordsworth's dictation, and known as the I.F. MS.

Grateful acknowledgments are here tendered to Dr. Grosart, for having kindly placed his collected edition of

Wordsworth's *Prose Writings* at our service; to Professor Knight, of St. Andrews, for similar courtesy in regard to his admirable volume on *The English Lake District as Interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth;* and also to Dr. Robert Angus Smith, F.R.S., and the Rev. Richard Wilton, M.A., of Londesborough Rectory, for various timely suggestions, which have been adopted in the following pages.

A. J. S.

LANGSIDE, GLASGOW.
*May, 1881.*

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# WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

## CHAPTER I.

### Introductory.

Wordsworth's standing—Quoted with Shakspere and Milton—Characteristics of his Poetry—Ridiculed by certain Critics—His high aims and hopes fully realized—Plain living and high thinking—Fragmentary extracts illustrative of Nature and Human Life—Moral and Spiritual tone—Healing power—Philosophic mind—His influence on public Taste—Defective Arrangement of his poems—Period of Production—Best Poems—Inequalities of "The Excursion"—Latter days spent amid the mountain scenery of his childhood, in a happy home, and with the society of a few choice friends—His rounded life and growing love of God—The study of Wordsworth specially recommended to the young, as a helpful source of strength, comfort, and joy.

Wordsworth is acknowledged to be one of the chief glories of English poetry, and to have exercised a greater, purer, healthier, and more elevating influence upon the thought-currents and literature of the age, than any poet who has appeared in the world since the days of Shakspere and Milton. Goethe, among European moderns, has by some been deemed "a larger and more splendid luminary;" but, from his want of spirituality and deficiency in clear moral perception, he belongs to a lower circle. Goethe knew more than Wordsworth of the world, as developed in the various phases of artificial society—more, unfortunately, than was for his own higher good. As an all-sided artist, he occupied a wider surface of earth; but, with greater spontaneity and naturalness, although more circumscribed in such directions, our great poet was, otherwise, both higher and deeper than

Goethe, and, from his habitual spiritual height, actually commanded wider horizons of time and space; while, for absolute purity of aim and moral worth, the two men are not, for one instant, to be named together.

Wordsworth's moral and intellectual influence, so deeply rooted in the essential truth of nature and humanity, and perennially rising and expanding in the sunlight of heaven, possesses all the conditions and elements which are necessary to insure growth and permanence.

Many of his lines are already firmly embedded in the English language itself, and have long been familiar as household words:—phrases such as "The child is father of the man," "The light that never was on sea or land," "Not too bright or good for human nature's daily food," "The still sad music of humanity," "The harvest of a quiet eye," "The mighty stream of tendency," "Plain living and high thinking," "The vision and the faculty divine," "Honour misplaced and dignity astray," "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," "True to the kindred points of heaven and home," &c. These are every day made use of, and often, by those who know not whence such lines are derived. This use of his language, singular to say, occurs to an extent only less than similar quotations made from the two great poets we have named; although the works of Shakspere and Milton have now been before the world for more than two centuries, whereas Wordsworth has but lately passed away from among us.

These three poets all abound in felicitous, unforgetable condensations,

> "Jewels five words long
> That on the stretch'd forefinger of all Time
> Sparkle for ever;"[1]

[1] Tennyson.

and, from the many similar qualities which they possess in common, the source of quotations from either of them is at times apt to be mistaken.

With true simplicity, clear depth, natural tenderness, moral grandeur, and a majestic and meditative imagination,—imagination being "Reason in her most exalted mood"—combined with a philosophical and profoundly genuine spiritual insight, which looked into the life of things, the great poet-teacher of the century, as he sings of love quietly blending "serious faith with inward glee," discloses to our view the very soul of Nature, and the significance of Human Life, in their co-relation to each other and to the great Creator. With a heart

> "Wedded to this goodly universe
> In love and holy passion,"

he viewed all created things as lovingly linked together, co-ordinated, and capable of being closely associated with human suffering or human joy; always making the outward objects of sense subservient to moral purposes, and these again "auxiliar to divine."

Thus, rationally, calmly, and with enduring freshness, proclaiming the deepest truths and uttering the strongest feelings, with a view to bring joy, by influencing our conduct for good and so elevating the soul, the *substance* of Wordsworth's poetry is a benign and unfailing ministry of wisdom, strength, beauty, health, and happiness, to those who have hearts to feel, eyes to see, and ears to hear; while, as to *form*, the verse which he utters manifests the most consummate art, and, with its faultless rhythm, sheer vigour, terse idiomatic strength, correct syntax, and perfect transparent purity of language, yields to Shakspere alone.

Coleridge justly characterized Wordsworth when he called him

"Friend of the wise and teacher of the good."

As in changes of costume, there are marked fashions, modes, or styles, which are peculiar to the poetry of different periods. In Wordsworth's young days, towards the close of the last century, the stilted and artificial, which had been in vogue, was already giving place to the natural. In this direction, the way had, so far, been well opened up by Cowper, Crabbe, and Burns, but no man had heretofore devoted himself either in exactly the same way or so ardently as Wordsworth did, to the loving study of Nature as a whole, or had produced such splendid results.

This, we confidently affirm, after making due allowance for all that can, in any way, be construed into fault or defect on his part:—frankly admitting that he altogether lacked the dramatic power of Shakspere—that he could not have written Burns' songs (who could?)—and that he did not possess Scott's skill in the art of constructing plots. He was defective, too, in humour, and passion.

In single poems, also, he is equalled by several of his predecessors—for all true poets who love Nature find out many of her meanings, although such true interpretation had hitherto only been revealed to us, as it were, by casual glimpses.

We also admit that George Herbert, who in his admirable poems displays a great love of nature, had, long ago, theoretically anticipated Wordsworth in declaring that the whole Universe, including Man, was closely and lovingly linked together, as it were, in one system of comparative anatomy—plainly affirming that "man is everything and more,"—a microcosm, he is "in little all the

sphere," while "each thing is full of duty," and so, as the old poet quaintly puts it, "herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they find their acquaintance there." How finely, too, he goes on to say:—

"Man is all symmetry,
Full of proportions, one limb to another,
And to all the world besides.
Each part may call the farthest brother:
For head with foot hath private amity;
And both, with moons and tides.

. . . . . .

"For us the winds do blow,
The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow.
Nothing we see but means our good:
As our delight, or as our treasure.
The whole is either our cupboard of food
Or cabinet of pleasure.

"The stars have us to bed;
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws.
Music and light attend our head.
All things unto our flesh are kind,
In their descent and being; to our mind,
In their ascent and cause.

. . . . . .

"More servants wait on Man
Than he'll take notice of. In ev'ry path
He treads down that, which doth befriend him
When sickness makes him pale and wan.
Oh, mighty love! Man is one world, and hath
Another to befriend him."

So sang the holy George Herbert, exactly two and a half centuries ago.

However, allowing for all such deductions, quite enough remains to establish our position.

The great, masterly, and really serviceable *original work* which Wordsworth accomplished for the ages—like that of James Watt in regard to the steam-engine—consisted in his gradually coming to see, and at length everywhere practically recognizing, and systematically making use of this close and pre-determined relationship between elemental Nature and moral Life, with an eye to peace and joy; readily finding the master-key to all Natural objects and phenomena in our common Humanity.

A true seer, while noting innumerable natural effects which no man had previously observed, or at least described, he never rested with mere photographic renderings, but "in a wise passiveness,"—which William Howitt declared was the spirit of Quakerism applied to poetry,—looking steadily with his soul, as well as with his eyes, he silently waited, saw into the very core and essences of things, and having invested them, as it were, with soul-light and human attributes, reverently contrived, by the aid of Religion, to gather from Nature's voices hope, strength, comfort, and joy, for the troubled and weary heart of Man.

The poetical theory which he propounded, in his much talked of Preface to the second issue of the *Lyrical Ballads*, after predicating—that the poet has a high and sacred mission and must be an elevating philosophical teacher or is nothing; and that he ought to lead men by truth, reverence, humility, love, duty, and obedience to become wiser and happier—to become true chords instead of discords in the universe—in effect, simply amounted to this:—That the whole economy of created things, material and spiritual, being linked together as parts of one great whole, the simplest and most common natural objects, or incidents in the humblest lives, when viewed rightly and relatively, afford suitable subjects for poetic treatment;

and also that the language employed, in so doing, ought to be such as is in common use among men.

Hence—he deliberately chose, for his themes, waggoners, peddlers, leech-gatherers, peasants, &c., as being truer types of human nature than the more sophisticated heroes usually selected for celebration in song; but, in the vigour of his protest against artificiality, he, at first, occasionally, and perhaps a little defiantly, overshot the mark by introducing certain hitherto inadmissible colloquial words or phrases, which critics, although quite incapable of comprehending a tithe of his real greatness, were sharp enough to resent and seize upon as handles for turning the whole of his work into ridicule, and so, for the time being, they contrived to make sport of him for the Philistines. In a similar way, once upon a time, a certain schoolmaster gravely condemned Milton's *Paradise Lost* as being greatly overestimated and quite beneath the notice of educated men on account of its grammatical inaccuracies. For about twenty years the *Edinburgh Review* thus systematically continued to abuse and ridicule Wordsworth's poetry, Jeffrey holding, as the poet himself said, "a perpetual retainer from his own incapacity to plead against my claims to public approbation." The attempt to put Wordsworth down, however, was vain; and, as Southey said to Hogg, of Jeffrey and the "Excursion," "he might as well have tried to crush Skiddaw."

Wordsworth, firmly convinced that, in the main, he was right; and that, if so, truth would at length prevail, gave himself little concern about such detraction; and, holding steadily on his way, steered right onward. His great anxiety was to utter his highest thought—and, in the very best way he could; that done, he was quite content patiently to wait the approval of future and better days; for he confidently believed that the world would

one day come right and learn to benefit by his earnest and consecrated teaching. Conscientious self-approval, domestic love and encouragement, together with the cordial sympathy of a few choice friends, amply sustained him in his work; and without doubt he had the rare power of casting high and beautiful thoughts into "forms which are accepted at once and remembered for ever."

His models as to style,—his theories notwithstanding —were Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspere, and Milton, and he himself becoming a master, like unto them, his large and luminous spirit shed over all that he saw,

"The light that never was on sea or land."

The calm way in which he regarded the virulent and persistent abuse of his shallow and short-sighted critics, while under their ban, may be gathered from his letters —particularly from one written to Lady Beaumont, of which hereafter—; while, later in life, when Fame had at length laid her tardy garland at his feet, the venerable poet said to Aubrey de Vere, "It is indeed a deep satisfaction to hope and believe that my poetry will be, while it lasts, a help to the cause of virtue and truth—*especially among the young.* As for myself, it seems now of little moment how long I may be remembered. When a man pushes off in his little boat into the great seas of infinity and eternity, it surely signifies little how long he is kept in sight by watchers from the shore."

Such, habitually, were Wordsworth's noble feelings and aspirations, as to the high and holy work to which he had conscientiously devoted his life. The immediate effect of the long persisted in, blind, and misguiding criticism of Jeffrey and the Edinburgh critics, to which reference has been made,—but of which Edward Irving thoroughly ashamed said, that it did not represent the

Scottish character or opinion,—was not only to retard the sale of the poems, thus entailing a money loss on Wordsworth, but to prevent many of the last generation from receiving, as they otherwise might, the benign influences of a great teacher, who was at once recognized, and as much rejoiced in, at the time, by the *few* who could then appreciate him—men such as Coleridge, Lamb, Talfourd, Hazlitt, Professor Wilson, and (Sir) Henry Taylor—as he now everywhere is by cultured minds.

To the critical world, it also presents the pitiful though by no means uncommon spectacle of the unappreciative reviewer—Lord Jeffrey, an acute Edinburgh lawyer—having his most elaborate judgments entirely reversed; and of his name, so far as literature is concerned, having now become chiefly memorable for the many eggregiously mistaken and absurdly blundering estimates of poets, which he himself either made, or in his time editorially sanctioned.

However, so many kindly personal traits are recorded of him, that probably this state of matters was Jeffrey's misfortune more than his fault. "A blind man," says Dr. South, "sitting in the chimney corner is pardonable enough, but sitting at the helm he is intolerable." When King Lear put a letter before a man without eyes, saying—"Mark but the penning of it;" he received for answer "Were all thy letters suns, I could not see."

True creative work, more surely than the mummy corn, long preserves its vitality through the Egyptian darkness of false criticism; and, in due time springing up in the sunlight, it at length becomes bread for the nourishment of the soul.

There are few instances, if any other, of a young man forming such an accurate estimate of his own poetical powers and capabilities, and, setting aside the ordinary

paths to fortune, deliberately consecrating his whole life-work to poetry, with the fixed resolve to teach and benefit mankind by uttering the highest and holiest truths in the best form; and who at the same time possessed the requisite energy and strength of will successfully to carry out such a noble resolution to the end of his days, through evil report and good report, with steady and unswerving devotion: such a career is truly sublime!

Like Milton, he earnestly tried to lead back his countrymen to simple manners and to simple laws; he himself, the while, practising as well as inculcating

"Plain living and high thinking."

For eight years he kept house with his sister, when their joint income did not exceed one hundred pounds a year, uttering, the while, in rhythmic form, wisdom, truth, and beauty, for all time.

Ever respecting the moralities, Wordsworth wisely placed heart before head; for he firmly believed that all

"True knowledge leads to love,"

apart from which, "intellectual power, through words and things," can only go "sounding on a dim and perilous way."

The creative faculty, in Wordsworth's case, was largely sustained and fostered by his fortunate environment as to friends and scenery; and above all by the "central peace" of domestic happiness. No man could have been more lovingly ministered to, either by wife or sister; and the minstrel's life, in perfect accord with all that his writings express, was, like his own "skylark,"

"Type of the wise, who soar but never roam,
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home."

As already said, no other poet, ever so lovingly devoted himself to the careful study of Nature, with the express and deliberate object of interpreting, by reason, the spirit of her universal symbolism, and, so, inciting to the better performance of the primal duties.

To illustrate some of these points, and also to bespeak interest for the chapters which follow, we here present a few short passages from Wordsworth's poems, the characteristic beauty and sublimity of which are quite apparent, notwithstanding their detached and fragmentary form. Beethoven could reveal the hidden soul of harmony, even in a few bars of his music:—

"I have seen a curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lip'd shell,
To which, in silence hush'd, his very soul
Listen'd intensely, and his countenance soon
Brighten'd with joy; for, murmuring from within,
Were heard sonorous cadences, whereby
To his belief the monitor express'd
Mysterious union with its native sea.
*Even such a shell the universe itself*
*Is to the ear of Faith.*"

"This universe shall pass away—a work
Glorious! because the shadow of thy might,
A step, or link, for intercourse with Thee!"

"For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity . . .
well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being."

"Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

"There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

. . . .

Love, now a universal birth
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth,
It is the hour of feeling."

"To the Daisy" he writes:—

"Bright *Flower!*—for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
Sweet silent creature!
That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature!"

In "Lines written in Early Spring," how beautifully he says!—

"I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreathes;

And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes."

At Ulpha, Wordsworth, observing a harebell, and calling Lady Richardson's attention to it, admiringly exclaimed, "How perfectly beautiful that is!" and repeated the following lines, taken from a poem of his own which originally referred to a mountain daisy:—

"So fair, so sweet, withal so sensitive,
Would that the little Flowers were born to live
Conscious of half the pleasure which they give!"

Looking at Arran from a steamer in the Frith of Clyde, he addresses it as "a single-crested Teneriffe," or "a St. Helena," in shape and hue, varying her "crowded peaks and ridges blue," and wishes that he could instantly be transported to the top of Goatfell. Then reflecting on the impolicy of the wish, and contrasting ambitious schemes with heart humilities, he finely adds:—

"Beneath stern mountains many a soft vale lies,
And lofty springs give birth to lowly streams."

In the same spirit he elsewhere writes:—

"Soft is the music that would charm for ever.
The flower of sweetest smell is shy and lowly."

He thus describes the Scottish Highlands, when in the neighbourhood of Loch Etive,—a district which Dr. Robert Angus Smith, F.R.S., by means of his original and patient antiquarian researches, has lately clothed with much fresh human interest:—

"This Land of Rainbows spanning glens whose walls,
Rock-built, are hung with rainbow-coloured mists—
Of far-stretched Meres whose salt flood never rests—
Of tuneful Caves and playful Waterfalls—
Of Mountains varying momently their crests—

Proud be this Land! whose poorest huts are halls
Where Fancy entertains becoming guests;
While native song the heroic Past recalls."

Then he turns with watchful eye to the Trossachs—

"'Mid Nature's old felicities,
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass
Untouched, unbreathed upon."

How fresh and vivid is the following morning picture from "Resolution and Independence!"—

"All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run."

Wordsworth admirably portrayed the thoughts, feelings, and ways of living men, women, and children—as well as the traits of natural landscape; and his deep sympathy and knowledge of the human heart enabled him, recognizing its sameness in the lowliest as in the highest, to affirm that "we have all of us one human heart." This, with his deliberately choosing to treat chiefly of the humbler orders, because they had hitherto been too often disregarded, despised, and neglected by the world, of itself, forms a striking feature and constitutes a great moral element in his poetry. "The short and simple annals of the poor" powerfully attracted him, because

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

Thus, reverencing Nature and the power of the human Mind, wherever he found true men—men who were true to themselves, to each other, and to God—he set himself the task of recording their praise, in his verse; dealing boldly with substantial things, and speaking of them in truth and sanctity of passion, in order to be just to those who, although externally rude, are nevertheless pure and noble within, and capable of performing service, high and acceptable, to God. Of such, he resolved, should be his song, hopefully adding—

> "Thus haply shall I teach,
> Inspire; through unadulterated ears
> Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,—my theme
> No other than the very heart of man,
> As found among the best of those who live,
> Not unexalted by religious faith,
> Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few,
> In Nature's presence: thence may I select
> Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
> And miserable love, that is not pain
> To hear of, for the glory that redounds
> Therefrom to human kind, and what we are."

In "Simon Lee" the ruling habit of Wordsworth's observant inner eye, in dealing with scenes of homely life around him, thus finds significant expression:—

> "O Reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle Reader! you would find
> A tale in every thing."

The lines, which he wrote in the album of a child, as touchingly sweet as they are truly philosophical, finely illustrate his lofty estimate of human character, his keen sympathy with nature, and his admirable mode of teach-

ing a lesson of love from the co-relationship and mutual inter-dependence of all God's creatures:—

"Small service is true service while it lasts,
Of friends, however humble, scorn not one;
The daisy—by the shadow that it casts—
Protects a lingering dewdrop from the sun."

In the same spirit, with reference to the service which we owe to Our Father in Heaven, while it is self-evident that we should ever cheerfully render HIM our highest and best, Wordsworth also as truly declares, that—

"He sees the bending multitude, He hears the choral rites,
Yet not the less in children's hymns and lonely prayer, delights.
God for His service needeth not proud work of human skill;
They please Him best who labour most to do in peace His will.
So let us strive to live, and to our spirits will be given
Such wings as, when the Saviour calls, shall bear us up to heaven."

Of the missionary Saints of Iona, good men who faithfully rendered such service by diffusing the light of the WORD amid pagan gloom—holding *it* to be the Paramount of mighty Nature—he finely says, that when the ruins of those far-famed piles, which they built on the isle, shall have disappeared, they

"Garlands shall wear of amaranthine bloom,
While *heaven's vast sea of voices chants their praise.*"

Wordsworth himself has plainly told us—

"The moving accident is not my trade:
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts:
'Tis my delight alone in summer shade
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts."

Possessing fine sympathies, not only with humanity but also with the whole animal world, after penning the poem "Gold and Silver Fishes in a Vase," in which he describes and speculates about the cold pure nature of the "mute captives," he also wrote a sequel called LIBERTY, after the same fishes, originally a gift from Miss Jewsbury, had been removed to a pool in the pleasure-ground of Rydal Mount; in this sequel the following lines occur:—

> "Who can divine what impulses from God
> Reach the caged lark, within a town-abode
> From his poor inch or two of daisied sod?
> O yield him back his privilege!—No sea
> Swells like the bosom of a man set free;
> A wilderness is rich, with Liberty."

Then he exults and rejoices in the independence of "spouting whales" in the fathomless deep; the tiny "nautilus" spreading its living sail, either diving at choice or braving the freshening gale; and of "the eagle" mounting and soaring sun-ward to the fount of light.

Wordsworth's poetry is pervaded throughout by a pure, spirit-bracing, moral tone, and a healing power. He protests against sordid money greed and exclusive selfishness in all its hateful manifestations, feeling that if "the world is too much with us," as a sure logical sequence, thought and scenery become dissociated, and "little we see in Nature that is ours."

With high-toned spirituality, while inculcating moral and religious truth, Wordsworth transmutes sorrow into strength, modulating, with the touch of a master, through yearning minor chords of singular richness and beauty, home to the dominant key-note of joy. Thus. at the grave of Burns, he seemed to hear

"Music that sorrow comes not near—
A ritual hymn
Chanted in love that casts out fear
By Seraphim."

"Moral truth" lives and thrives like the water-lily,

"Whose root is fixed in stable earth, whose head
Floats on the tossing waves."

Elsewhere, too, he says of his daughter Dora in "The Triad:"—

"What more changeful than the sea;
But over his great tides
Fidelity presides;
And this light-hearted Maiden constant is as he."

How beautiful is the following suggestion of comfort:—

"You have been wretched: yet
The silver shower, whose reckless burden weighs
Too heavily upon the lily's head,
Oft leaves a saving moisture at the root."

Taking cognizance of the issues ultimately involved in the conduct of life, he presents the following contrast:—

"Death with its two-fold aspect! wintry—one
Cold, sullen, blank, from hope and joy shut out;
The other which the ray divine hath touched,
Replete with vivid promise, bright as spring."

And, as a sure means to the attainment of equanimity, he elsewhere says:—

"If thou art beautiful, and youth
And thought endue thee with all truth—
Be strong; be worthy of the grace
Of God, and fill thy destined place:
A soul, by force of sorrows high,
Uplifted to the purest sky
Of undisturbed humanity."

Such are a few stray cut-flowers, gathered as specimens from the poet's garden; or say—gleanings, from the harvest of his quiet eye.

In subsequent chapters, more will be found, with here and there whole plants, root and fruit; and sheaves of golden grain, both for bread and seed-corn,—selected from his writings, and generally presented in their chronological order.

Wordsworth, great as a Poet, was also great as a Moralist and a Philosopher. His intellect had fathomed the profoundest depths of philosophy and theology, so that he intuitively knew all that could be known of those great problems which have exercised thinking minds in every age, from Job to Paul, and from Plato to Kant; and we frequently find him condensing the very essence of a whole ethical or philosophical system into a single line.

A poet, singing with all due preparation and a very high sense of consecrated responsibility,

> "Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love, and hope,
> And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
> Of blessed consolations in distress,
> Of moral strength and intellectual power,
> Of joy in widest commonalty spread,"

the whole benign tendency of Wordsworth's writings is, to make men more thoughtful, gentle, dutiful, and kind —in short, to quote his own words used in regard to his aim in influencing human nature and society, to make "men wiser, better, and happier."

Recognizing his sweet-controlling, efficacious, and lasting influence for good, Hartley Coleridge, addressing the poet, truly declares:—

> "Long as man exists, immortal bard,
> Friends, husbands, wives, in sadness or in glee,
> Shall love each other more for loving thee."

This, the healthy and regenerating power of his genius, has already permeated and leavened public taste to such an extent, that what is pure, simple, and elevating, is now looked for; such features being essential elements in all poetry which is entitled to rank as good.

The present classified arrangement of Wordsworth's poems is inconvenient, artificial, and unsatisfactory; not that it could be better done on *such* a plan, but because the arbitrary divisions into poems of the "fancy," of the "imagination," of the "affections," &c., adopted by Wordsworth, cannot be distinctly made; for these various characteristics often modulate into each other, and are at times all to be met with in single poems, where it is hard to decide which trait predominates, so as to determine the key-note.

It is somewhat like the common difficulty experienced in arranging books for easy reference on the shelves of a library, where a compromise has to be effected between the sizes and the subjects of the different volumes. An edition of Wordsworth, with the poems arranged simply in the order of their production, would be a great boon to readers, and is decidedly a desideratum.

Wordsworth continued to produce poetry for a period extending over about sixty years; but the great bulk of his most perfect work is comprised within the ten years dating from 1798 to 1808.

His best poems are his shorter ones, such as "Michael," "The Fountain," "The Solitary Reaper," "The Highland Girl," "Stepping Westward," "She was a Phantom of Delight," "Lucy," "Yew-trees," "Nutting," &c. The story of "The Deserted Cottage," with some other touching episodes, and the many strikingly grand or beautiful passages which abound in "The Excursion," and in "The Prelude,"—which last is a mental autobiography, record-

ing the formation and ripening of his opinions and habits of thought—also stand prominently out.

The inequalities of "The Excursion" have been frequently pointed out and remarked on, as if detracting from its grandeur and worth, by those who object to bald matters of fact being placed side by side with

"Thoughts that breathe and words that burn;"

and "star-fire and immortal tears," along with "the homeliest bread and butter of moral commonplace." But do not mountains seem higher when they rise from plains? effects of light and shade are needed to enhance each other; and Sir Henry Taylor boldly says, "Every great poem *ought* to be unequal." In "The Excursion," as in the finest metal-work of the old Etruscan period, where all is of the purest gold, what is brought out in relief, and highly burnished, shows all the brighter by contrast with those parts which are purposely and artistically left dim, roughly granulated, flat, or frosted.

Many of his simple ballads recall the exquisite pathos of Cowper, as exhibited in his "Lines written on the receipt of my Mother's Picture," or in the sonnet and verses he addressed "To Mary Unwin." Then there is the marvellous "Ode on Intimations of Immortality"—probably the finest ode in the language; and, nearly akin to it, "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey;" while many of his magnificent sonnets possess a strength, directness, depth, and delicacy peculiarly their own, and which fairly entitle them to take rank with those of Milton.

In Wordsworth's life and work, there was a rounded completeness. He deliberately set himself to do a great work, and nobly did it. Calmly holding on the evenly tenor of his way, though virulently and persistently

assailed by shallow ignorant critical obloquy and ridicule, he led an exceptionally happy and tranquil home life, which was spent mostly among the mountains, and in the occupation which was his delight.

"When Wordsworth," said the late Professor Henry Reed, "retired to dwell in the mountain-district of the North of England, there was in the spirit of his seclusion nothing of a morbid solitariness. It was a retirement sought as favourable not only to the genial and studious culture of his endowments, but also to the most propitious intercourse with his fellow-men. There was nothing of that faint and false-hearted flight from society of which genius has sometimes been guilty; but retirement was chosen as the vantage ground of imagination and meditative truth, and in his solitude he has nursed his heart in a quick sensibility to all healthy sympathies with his country and mankind. His plan of life has been kept inviolate: his home is still among the mountains; his heart is with humanity the wide world over:—

"'He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.
He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noonday grove:
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.
The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has view'd,
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.'"

He enjoyed cordial intercourse with Coleridge, Southey, and Lamb; possessed the friendship of Sir Walter Scott, De Quincey, Professor Wilson, Sir George Beaumont, Mrs. Hemans, and Rogers; and he was supremely happy in finding his best advisers, along with the deepest intellec-

tual sympathy (as Southey tells us of him), in the female members of his own family. This amply sustained and cheered him. The world, at length, came round to his way of thinking; and, by universal acclaim, he was openly acknowledged to be the greatest of living poets, and he "who uttered nothing base" was crowned with the laurel.

The home of his honoured old age was located amid the scenes of his childhood, thus realizing the happy peaceful forecast made in that early poem, written before he left school, and of which only a fragment has been preserved:—

"Dear native regions, I foretell,
From what I feel at this farewell,
That, wheresoe'er my steps may tend,
And whensoe'er my course shall end,
If in that hour a single tie
Survive of local sympathy,
My soul will cast the backward view,
The longing look alone on you.

Thus, while the sun sinks down to rest
Far in the regions of the west,
Though to the vale no parting beam
Be given, not one memorial gleam,
A lingering light he fondly throws
On the dear hills where first he rose."

Of Wordsworth's perfectly rounded life, the Rev. Richard Wilton remarks:—"It was brightened by the intensest love of Nature, and it was hallowed by a constant and growing love of God."

His works, in which the instincts of Childhood and the most mature deductions of Reason lovingly coincide and truthfully point to the source of all Wisdom, constitute a rich legacy which he has left to the "thinking hearts" of all time. We say, to thinking hearts—for

"Minds that have nothing to confer
Find little to perceive."

In his poems, the young will be charmed with many simple Ballad Tales, which "he may run that readeth;" and from these be pleasantly led on, step by step, through his vast and priceless treasures of wisdom, beauty, and calm restful joy, which, day by day, they will find ever becoming increasingly precious, and to be quite inexhaustible, even after attaining to the philosophic mind of maturer years; for Wordsworth's writings, as was said by an old divine, of the Scriptures, "are like a river, wherein there are as well shallow foords for lambes to wade in, as depths for the elephant to swim in."

We therefore earnestly entreat the young at once to begin to read and become familiar with Wordsworth; for no poet that ever lived imparts so wisely and so well what he teaches. The careful and reverential study of Wordsworth is in itself a moral and intellectual education of a very high order; and the sooner it is begun, and comes to be prosecuted with real delight, the better. The substance and texture of his writings, being both of the very best, wear well; and,—at once God-like and manly —with no taint of morbidity, are the more valued, the longer and oftener we read them; nor, after the direct teaching of Bible truth, and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, with perhaps some half dozen of the best hymns, do any other contemplative or religious writings known to us exert the same healthful, restful, calming, healing power to thoughtful, downcast, and desponding hearts in this weary work-a-day world.

We promise those who enter upon such a profitable study, that having once learned to love Wordsworth, and really begun to assimilate his glorious sanative teaching, the following beautiful lines, from "The Excursion,"

will then serve as a literal record of their pleasant experience, whether by their having had sunshine added to daylight in seasons of happiness, or, by such soothing ministration in times of grief that sorrow has been slowly but surely transmuted into strength and solemn joy. This power dwells in Wordsworth's verse; and as all, sooner or later in life, must encounter changeful, stormy weather, surely such helpful preparation for meeting it is desirable. The lines to which we allude are these:—

> "And when the stream
> Which overflowed the soul was passed away,
> A consciousness remained that it had left,
> Deposited upon the silent shore
> Of memory, images and precious thoughts,
> That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed."

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## CHAPTER II.

### Birth, Childhood, and School-days.

Ancestry—Birth—Sister and Brothers—Cockermouth—Bathing in the Derwent—Wayward as a Child—Maternal Anxiety and Moral Training—Individuality—Dame School at Penrith—Sister's Influence—"The Sparrow's Nest"—Mother's Death—Happy School-Days at Hawkshead—Books Read—Passionate Love of Nature—First Verses—Begins to note Fresh Natural Appearances—Father's Death—Kept at School by Relatives—The Influence of Early Impressions on his Poetry—His Life Written in his Works.

Though Wordsworth was born in Cumberland, he came of an old, hardy, Northumbrian stock that had lived for generations in Yorkshire before going further north. The family, in olden days, were yeomen or landed gentry, and various of his ancestors are so designated in old charters at Penistone, near Doncaster. In that neighbourhood the name can be traced back to the

reign of Edward the Third; and, although his father was an attorney-at-law, and his mother the daughter of a draper, the poet delighted to trace back the probable history of the family, on both sides of the house, to times beyond the Conquest.

In his dining-room, stood an oak chest or almery, a piece of old furniture curiously carved and bearing a Latin inscription which stated that it was made, in 1525, for William Wordsworth who was the son of, &c. &c.—giving the pedigree of the ancestors of said William for four generations back, and ending with the prayer—"On whose souls may God have mercy!" This antique heirloom had somehow come into the possession of Colonel Beaumont, who restored it to the family by making a present of it to the poet.

Ellis Yarnall, an American gentleman to whom Wordsworth showed it, in describing his Rydal Mount visit to the late Professor Henry Reed, Wordsworth's accomplished and appreciative correspondent, and the friend who had introduced him to the poet, in mentioning the old chest thus refers to the pious motto carved on it:—

"This, Wordsworth repeated twice, and in an emphatic way, as he read the inscription. It seemed to me that he took comfort in the religious spirit of his ancestors, and that he was also adopting the solemn ejaculation for himself. There was something very impressive in his manner."

The branch of the family from which Wordsworth sprang was originally planted at Falthwaite, near Stainborough, in Yorkshire, from which locality, about the beginning of last century, the poet's grandfather was the first of the name to migrate westward. He bought and settled on the small estate of Sockbridge, near Penrith.

His son John—the poet's father—an attorney, and

law-agent to Sir James Lowther afterwards created Earl of Lonsdale, managed the western portion of the extensive Lowther estates.

He married Anne Cookson the only daughter of a mercer in Penrith, but whose mother was a Crackanthorp of the ancient family of that name which had been seated at Newbiggen Hall, in Westmoreland, for between five and six centuries, and they took up house, in an old mansion belonging to the earl, at Cockermouth.

In this old manor house, on the 7th of April, 1770, William Wordsworth, the greatest contemplative and philosophical poet that Britain has produced, was born.

He was the second of four sons, and in the family there was only one daughter, named Dorothy, the dear sympathetic sister who afterwards became the invaluable and life-long associate of the poet.[1]

Cockermouth lies, about twelve miles from Keswick, at the junction of the Cocker with the Derwent, which latter has its source up in the Borrowdale mountains behind. The old castle, standing on a bold eminence on the east bank of the Cocker, with its shattered towers mirrored on the smooth water, presents a striking feature in the landscape; and, at the top of the one long street of the market-town, stands the large square old mansion in which the poet was born.

Wordsworth's local memories of very early childhood, and his allusions to Cockermouth which was his home, only during that period, are chiefly connected with the river Derwent, then to him "the fairest of all rivers." His subsequent school-days, at Hawkshead, produced

[1] The eldest son became an attorney, and died in 1816; the third went to sea, became commander of an East Indiaman, and perished by shipwreck off Weymouth in 1805. The youngest, Christopher, entered the Church, became known as Dr. Wordsworth the author of a work entitled *Ecclesiastical Biography*, and for many years was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

impressions of nature which were far more numerous, deep, powerful and lasting; in short, his school-days may be said to have laid the foundation for all that he afterwards accomplished as a poet.

At Cockermouth, he tells us, the voice of the Derwent flowed along his dreams; and, that, when he was only five years of age, he used to bathe in a small mill-race, led apart from the river; only coming out of the water to bask in the sun, plunge in, and bask again, thus making

"One long bathing of a summer's day."

Like a little naked Indian, he scoured the sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves of yellow ragwort nearly as tall as himself, when rock and hill, the woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height were bronzed with deepest radiance.

He also tells us that, as a child, he was very wayward and moody; and that his mother—a very superior woman, who, while carefully training his moral nature, wisely respecting instinctive tendencies, and avoiding stimulation, allowed his intellect to develop at a natural pace—once remarked to a friend that "she had no anxieties about any of her five children except William. She was sure he would turn out an extraordinary man, and she hoped a good man, but she was not so sure of that." She perceived, in her son, the germs of genius, but his indomitable self-will and moody perversity naturally gave her much anxiety. On one occasion, when at his grandfather's house, on the child receiving some indignity, he actually contemplated suicide, and retired to an attic where he knew that some old foils were kept, in order to accomplish his purpose, but his heart failed him, and a better fate was in store. At another time, in the same house at Penrith, when whipping tops on

the large drawing-room floor when the carpet was up, he wantonly dared his eldest brother Richard to strike a whip through the canvas of a portrait which hung on the wall; and, on the foolish proposal being very properly declined, he himself said "Then, here goes"—and forthwith did the deed. However, the misdirected force of character thus early displayed, in such irregular and disorderly ways, by the moody, meditative, imaginative child, afterwards became an element of true power in the man, and enabled him to assert his individuality, and go calmly and steadily on in the good course which he had chalked out for himself, even when blatant, critical headwinds blew their hardest.

As a child, he spent much time with his mother's relatives at Penrith; and, when there, was sent to a dame school, taught by old Mrs. Anne Birkett, whose old-fashioned methods exercised the memory more than the reason, but of whom Wordsworth always continued to speak with affection and respect. She had taught three generations of children, chiefly of the better classes. There, too, among her pupils and only a few months younger than himself, was his cousin and class playmate Mary Hutchinson, who, some six-and-twenty years thereafter, became his wife and beloved partner for nearly half a century. Afterwards, at Cockermouth, on till his ninth year, he attended a school taught by the Rev. Mr. Gilbanks, from whom he acquired the rudiments of learning; while his father wisely set him to learn portions of the best English poets by heart, so that, at an early age, Wordsworth could repeat large portions of Shakspere, Milton, and Spenser.

The beneficial influence of his sister Dorothy, who was nearly two years younger than himself, was, even then, very great; and it continued to tell on him throughout

his whole career. In alluding to these times, Wordsworth himself thus contrasts her loving tenderness and sweetness of disposition with his own rougher temper—the "sister Emmeline," named in the lines, being his only sister Dorothy:—

"Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when, in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey:—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings."

The following poem, which relates to the same period, is also exquisitely descriptive of her:—

## THE SPARROW'S NEST.

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started—seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,—
The sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by,
My father's house, in wet or dry,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.
She looked at it as if she feared it;
Still wishing, dreading to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little prattler among men.
The blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;

And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

He lost his mother, in 1778, when he was only eight years old. She died from the effects of a cold, unfortunately caught by sleeping at a friend's house in London amid "the damp dignity of a best bedroom." She had conducted the moral and mental training of his early childhood in a wise, liberal, and confiding spirit; and of her he retained a faint but ever tender recollection, and all allusions to her, in his poems, are replete with natural feeling and pathos.

On their mother's death, Dorothy was removed from Cockermouth to reside with various maternal relatives, and William was sent to school, so that the fondly attached brother and sister were now separated, and saw but little of each other for several years. At this time, in 1778, Wordsworth was in his ninth year, when he, along with his elder brother, was sent off to school. It was the old and once famous Grammar School founded by Archbishop Sandys at Hawkshead, about two hundred years before; and he remained there till he was fourteen.

The village of Hawkshead, beautifully situated in the most picturesque district of Lancashire, is an upland hamlet to the west of Windermere, with Esthwaite Water close by it on the south, and Coniston Water not far off. The district, green and beautiful with gently undulating hills and wooded slopes mirrored clearly in the crystal water, commands, to the west, a full view of Kirkstone Pass, Fairfield, and Helvellyn.

Here, young Wordsworth, during certain hours of the day, attended that old-fashioned school, which, with its mild rule and natural pace, was quite a contrast to the

elaborate and hurtful high-pressure forcing systems now in vogue in so many academies and educational institutions; courses which, in addition to cruelly robbing children of their youth, are certain to inflict permanent injury on the immature nervous system, and very seriously interfere with the ultimate development of the brain itself. "It is to me," says the shrewd President James Abram Garfield, "a perpetual wonder that any child's love of knowledge survives the outrages of the school-house."

Wordsworth speaks affectionately of an usher named Shaw, who taught him more Latin in a fortnight than he had acquired during the two preceding years at Cockermouth. But that excellent master unfortunately left the school for Stafford. The boys did not live in the school-house at Hawkshead, but were boarded throughout the village with the cottagers, who treated them in a friendly, kindly, unrestrained way, as if they were members of the family. Out of school hours, they were absolutely free to roam the fields, woods, copses, mountain-sides, or by the margins of the lakes; fishing, boating, or even going on distant riding expeditions, when their pocket-money would admit of the outlay for hiring horses. In winter they skated on the frozen lake, took long walks, or climbed the crags, taking full advantage of their privileges, early and late; and sometimes by night as well as by day.

Anne Tyson was the name of the kindly old motherly, maiden dame with whom Wordsworth lodged, and of whom he wrote—

> "The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew
> Upon thy grave, good creature!"

He often reverted to her garden, with "its brook, and dark pine-tree, and the stone table under it;" and of his chamber, where on summer nights he had often lain

awake watching the moon shining in splendour through the leaves of a tall ash that stood near the cottage.

No school life could have been better adapted for the education of a poet. The surrounding scenery, wild and picturesque, was, as yet, uninvaded by tourists. The eagle still frequented the neighbourhood, and was a yearly dread to the shepherd when it returned to its eyrie.

The simplicity and sturdy independence of the dalesmen, whom he afterwards pictured in "The Excursion," uncontaminated by the artificialities of city life from which they were then quite shut out, almost constituted them into a little isolated mountain republic.

Here, Wordsworth could, in solitude, hold constant and intimate communion with nature; while he had also, before him, examples of human life exalted by a virtuous and dutiful regard for its relationships to God and man, although outwardly moving in an humble sphere.

Foremost among his fellows in daring feats and wild enterprises, Wordsworth would venture to climb the steepest crags, or creep along a dizzy ridge of fractured castle-wall, to obtain a view of the far-stretching landscape from some old arched window space, even there, as he tells us, catching

"The harebell's faintest whisper to the passing breeze."

Or, when out riding with the joyous band of school-boys, after a wide circuit, probably to Morecambe Bay, he describes the party as hastening back to their distant home along the margin of the moonlight sea, and beating,

"With thundering hoofs, the level sand."

His reading at this time was in Fielding, Cervantes, Le Sage, Swift, and *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment.*

He read, and re-read, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *The Tale of a Tub*, as being then much to his taste. But such reading—although doubtless it contributed to the strength and purity of his English style—and even his regular Latin and mathematical school tasks, were each and all quite secondary and subordinate to that real and far higher self-education of observation and reflection which was now going on, both furnishing and fitting him for his great and unique life-work, as *the* Poet of Nature.

His love of verse, he dates from the age of nine or ten, when he describes himself as rising early and strolling with a companion, for two delightful hours before the morning school, repeating rhymes with an ecstasy which bordered upon intoxication.

He relates that, at this time, so much was he delighted with a view from a spot called "The Station," that he took an Irish urchin, who served an itinerant conjuror, from Hawkshead to the spot which commanded Esthwaite Lake and its islands, for the sole satisfaction of witnessing the pleasure the lad would receive on first beholding fields and groves intermingled with water. The little boy was about his own age, nor was young Wordsworth disappointed. In every expedition which he planned, the beauties of the landscape were, from the first, considered as important adjuncts; but, after a time, such features became the primary objects of his pursuit, and he soon began intelligently to read those inherent correspondencies and subtle affinities with humanity, which pervade the outward cosmos, heightening each effect of light and shade, and seeing every object or process more clearly and truly, whether observed absolutely or relatively, by throwing upon it a steady gleam of soul-light from his own powerful mind.

In "Lines Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey,"

some fifteen years after he left Hawkshead School, looking back, he has recorded, how even his earliest boyhood was haunted by Nature like a passion; in the first instance, for her own sake, but afterwards, with

> "A sense sublime,
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man
> A motion and a spirit that impells
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."

At Hawkshead, he not only gathered up "rememberable things" of which he afterwards made remarkable use, but he had actually begun to write verses. His first two attempts were called "The Summer Vacation," and "Return to School;" one of them had been prescribed by his teacher, and the other was a voluntary exercise.

In 1815, among other scholars, he wrote a poem on the second centenary of the school, in heroic measure. It was admired at the time and possesses considerable merit as the production of a boy of his years, although Wordsworth himself afterwards disparaged it, describing it as a tame imitation of Pope.

Encouraged by the approval of his centenary effort, for practice, he next wrote a long poem recording his own adventures, and describing the scenery of the surrounding country, which he had so thoroughly explored. Of this poem, only the concluding lines, beginning "Dear native regions," (already quoted) have been preserved. The poem "An Evening Walk" was written partly at Hawkshead and partly at college. Wordsworth told Miss Fenwick that he distinctly remembered the very spot and

moment when the following image, expressed in it first struck him:—

> "And fronting the bright West, yon oak entwines
> Its darkening boughs and leaves in stronger lines."

"It was on the way between Hawkshead and Ambleside, and gave me extreme pleasure. The moment was important in my poetical history; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency. I could not have been at that time above fourteen years of age."

This resolution he kept, and he is thought to have added more fresh and accurate images from nature, actually drawn from his own observation, than any other poet since Homer. It was at Hawkshead he laid up those treasuries of natural observation, of which he afterwards made such wise and glorious use. Intercommunion with Nature, so constant and passionate, the world had never before seen, in any poet, young or old.

Wordsworth, as we have said, lost his mother, whose nature he to a large extent inherited, when he was very young; and, shortly afterwards, in 1783, his father also died. When this sad event took place, Wordsworth was in his fourteenth year, and in the midst of the school-days at Hawkshead which we have been endeavouring to describe. His father had never regained his cheerfulness after his wife's death, and, one winter evening, he lost his way on Cold Fell, near Ennerdale, and, wandering about for a whole night, he was there and then seized with an attack which carried him off, after a few weeks' illness. William and his brother happened to be at home from

school, for the Christmas holidays, when their father died.

The old home at Cockermouth was now broken up. But little was left for the maintenance of the orphans, as the chief part of their late father's estate consisted of arrears due to him by the eccentric Earl of Lonsdale, which just claim, that strange self-willed nobleman resisted and refused to pay, but his successor, a man of a very different stamp, nineteen years afterwards, made it good to the family—both principal and interest. Meanwhile two uncles kindly took upon themselves the care of the family, and the boys were sent back to Hawkshead school, where William remained till 1787, when he was sent to the university.

We have purposely dwelt at greater length on the early portion of the poet's life, because in it the substantial Wordsworth was formed; it satisfactorily explains all that follows, and gives the key to what he afterwards became. In his subsequent poems, he constantly reverts to the sights and impressions of this period. His thoughts, feelings, and actions are duly and plainly set down in "The Prelude," which is a mental autobiography; so that, with it and his other writings before us, we find in his own words nearly all that is needed for the record of a life eminently characterized by "plain living and high thinking." We can thus trace the steady growth and progress of one of the most highly moral, philosophical, and poetical minds that ever lived.

We have the far-seeing and mature wisdom of his sound constitutional, political views; the long conflict which he maintained with crude and colour-blind criticism; and his own calm, confident anticipation of that ultimate and complete success which he happily lived to achieve, ere he was crowned with the laurel. The record of each of

these stages is deeply rooted in the past of which we have been speaking.

In the immortal "Ode," the absolute spirituality of that ideal world, in which the nature-loving, meditative, precocious child progressively lived, moved, and had his being, is revealed to us in glorious flashes of living splendour.

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## CHAPTER III.

### Cambridge Days.

Enters St. John's College—Dislikes the change from Freedom to Restraint—Not a Reading Man—Dress and Society—Love of Nature—Native instincts—Sets Honours aside—Revisits Hawkshead—Meets his Sister and Cousin at Penrith—Returns to Cambridge—Studies Italian—English Poetry—Newton's Statue—Milton—A Sunrise—Poetic Consecration—"Evening Walk"—Continental Tour—The Alps—Lake of Como—Misled by first aspect of the French Revolution—"Descriptive Sketches"—Last Term at Cambridge—Pilot minds—Master key—Graduates B.A.—Cramming hurtful—Wordsworth's impression of University Life.

In October, 1787, when in his eighteenth year, Wordsworth was sent, by his uncles, to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he remained for four years. His university career, however, was neither congenial to himself nor satisfactory to his friends.

From Hawkshead school, he had brought Latin enough to enable him to enjoy the Roman poets. He had also mastered five books of Euclid and knew a little Greek, so that, he could have started with the average freshmen of his class, had he been so inclined.

Brought up among the mountains, water-falls, and lakes of Westmoreland, where he had ever been free to roam, his heart was still there—and he cared little for the flat country around Cambridge. Besides, he could ill brook the unaccustomed mental and bodily restraints which college rules and regulations imposed upon him.

He loved Nature and Solitude when he was alone; but, on occasion, he was also powerfully attracted towards his fellow-men. This latter trait enabled him at first, so far, to enjoy the free unguarded hours of intercourse during which he mingled with students, of his own age, with varied experiences, and of diverse character. Such intercourse, novel and attractive, was invaluable to him, as affording an insight which enlarged his knowledge of human nature, and at the same time supplied him with material for thought, of which he afterwards made good use in his quiet meditative life among the mountains.

Wordsworth never became "a reading man." He could, as he said, "judge better of thoughts," and liked to deal directly with them, finding them at first hand for himself, and using them in his own way. The prescribed routine of uncongenial university studies decidedly repelled him.

Although he had been careless about his dress before, and careless ever after, while at the university, he patronized the tailor, dressed gaily in silk stockings, and wore silver buckles on his shoes. He mingled in the stream of society, as he found it, boating, riding, supping, lounging and sauntering about, and full of animal spirits; but be it remarked, that here as elsewhere, Wordsworth—ever a model of honour, virtue and purity—like the good knight Bayard, was "without fear and without reproach."

While thus, for a time, making the most of his new environment, and seeming to float with the straws on the surface of the stream, deep down in his heart remained the old passionate love of nature and of simple life. We are told that, as a freshman "Wordsworth in the presence of his boon companions kept a veil on his better mind; for, when he betrayed, by his involuntary gestures, his latent sympathies with earth and sky, they would

whisper among themselves that 'there must be a screw loose.'"

When the novelty of the change had worn off, he became dissatisfied with the somewhat idle, drifting life he was leading; and, waking up to a sense of the evils of dependence, would for a time feel, and mentally face the urgent necessity of fulfilling the not unreasonable expectations of his friends, by fitting himself in some way for earning a maintenance; although, with no definite plan before him, and having many doubts, anxieties, and fears, on that vexed subject, which were not finally cleared away till eight years afterwards. Meanwhile, to a large extent, he withdrew from the promiscuous society in which he had been mingling, and kept more by himself. His thoughts, active and healthy, fell back on his strong native instincts. To him, the college Dons seemed very ordinary individuals, as compared with "the Bacons, Barrows, and Newtons of the old time." University honours could, doubtless, be had at a price; but he deliberately judged that, so purchased, they would be too dearly paid for. As a general rule, he was right, and in his own case specially so; for there stirred within him a latent power to do work, which was of infinitely greater value, both to himself and to the world. This he afterwards accomplished for all time; and, so, was fully justified in following an original course, of which, as it had never before been pioneered, no university could indicate the direction—or even, if that were hit upon, tell what was to be done, much less, assist him in the doing of it.

Cambridge is more famed for distinguished names than Oxford; but the great Self-educated Outside-University World—headed by Shakspere—is more famous in this way than all other universities put together.

At the close of his first Cambridge year, Wordsworth

returned to Hawkshead to spend the summer vaca and, there, was rejoiced to lodge again beneath the lowly roof of the kind old friendly dame, to share her humble fare, and revisit dear old scenes, the haunts of his thrice happy school-days. In his excursions, he visited his sister Dorothy near Penrith, and had many pleasant rambles with her by stream and vale. There, too, he also met "another maid" Mary Hutchinson his cousin, his old dame-school little classmate, and his wife to be,—she who, as he tells us, was first endeared to him by her exulting look of youth and placidity of expression; and who not only shed a gladness o'er that season, but to the end of his life, having "one of the most benignant tempers that ever diffused peace and cheerfulness through a home." She was, in truth, as he designated her in a beautiful poem written three years after marriage, a "Phantom of Delight," "not too bright or good for human nature's daily food."

The old home had been broken up, and the family scattered, since his father's death, so that Wordsworth gladly availed himself of the vacations to escape to his old freedom, and renew pleasant intercourse with his sister whom he now saw as frequently as he could. In days of childhood she had moderated and soothed his moody temper; she now exerted a softening sisterly influence on his mind, and he, in return, commanding a wider horizon, elevated hers. She was as moonlight to him; and he, as sunshine to her.

On returning to the university, from Hawkshead, he spent many of his winter evenings in the college gardens by the Cam. He read more, although he never during any period of his life was a devourer of books; he always preferred direct intercourse with nature and life, and, in addition to this preference, later on, he was troubled with inflammation in his eyes, which made writing so difficult for

him, that he oftener than not had recourse to an amanuensis. He now took diligently to the study of the Italian language, under a master who had known the poet Gray, and he made such rapid and satisfactory progress, that he was soon able to execute fair Italian translations of "The Vision of Mirza," and other papers from the *Spectator*. Caring little for the usual curriculum—which, however, he could not have thus set aside, either in German, Scottish, or American Universities—he also applied himself to extend his acquaintance with the English poets—particularly Chaucer, Shakspere, Spenser, and Milton.

From his dormitory pillow in St. John's, looking out by moonlight or "favouring stars," he tells us he could behold the ante-chapel of Trinity, where stood the great statue—

> "Of Newton with his prism and silent face
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone."

Thoughts of Milton, who in his youth paced these same "studious cloisters pale," and of other great men whose memories seemed still to haunt and hallow the place, seem to have strengthened his resolution to become a poet, and gradually led him seriously to conclude that he might even dare hope to leave something behind him worthy of taking a permanent place in the literature of his country, and of being "reverenced by pure hearts." He speaks of a magnificent sunrise seen one morning when he had been up all the previous night on a festive occasion, which glorious spectacle greatly impressed him, and brought on a crisis of glowing feeling that coloured his whole after-life.

As he gazed, his heart became full to the brim; and, henceforth, he considered himself a dedicated spirit.

To this consecration, he was ever loyal, as Brimley points out, in the course of an admirable essay on his poetry.

He united the philosophical breadth of Coleridge with the minute touches and more than homely pathos of Crabbe—the profoundest speculations on society with the simplest annals of the poor; combining purity, elevation of character, lofty wisdom, noble seriousness, and a meditative observation of men and character, which makes his poetry no less rich in wisdom than in beauty and feeling.

In 1789 he completed the poem "An Evening Walk," which he had begun at school. The young lady to whom it is addressed was his sister, and the scene is laid among the lakes with which they were familiar; although the natural descriptions are somewhat idealized, and not always strictly literal local transcripts. Abounding in rich imagery, the language is vigorous but trammelled by its being after the style of Pope. In it, occurs the following picture which, although subsequently retouched, even in its first form, clearly and unmistakably indicated the coming master:—

> "The swan uplifts his chest, and backward flings
> His neck, a varying arch, between his towering wings:
> The eye that marks the gliding creature sees
> How graceful pride can be, and how majestic, ease."

In July 1790, during his third and last long vacation—athirst for nature and freedom, loving scenery, sympathizing with the French people, and college studies and honours, without any misgivings, long cast behind him—he set out on a pedestrian tour through France, Switzerland, and the north of Italy. This he did, without informing his friends, so as to avoid their well-meant opposition and remonstrances. His companion was a fellow-undergraduate named Jones, who afterwards be-

came a clergyman in the Church of England. He was of a happy disposition, intelligent, and a Welshman accustomed to mountain-climbing. The youths had only twenty pounds apiece in their pockets, but with staff in hand, and all their "needments" tied up in a pocket handkerchief, they trudged along, each paying his way with four shillings a day. They were absent fourteen weeks, returning home in time for the Cambridge October term.

In Switzerland, Wordsworth says, his spirits were kept "in a perpetual hurry of delight by the almost uninterrupted succession of sublime and beautiful objects." With feelings of deep emotion, he crossed

> "The lordly Alps themselves
> Those rosy peaks, from which the morning looks
> Abroad on many nations,"

and, as they hurried down the southern slopes, he tells us, that, as he beheld the immeasurable height "of woods decaying, never to be decayed," "the stationary blasts of waterfalls," "winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn," torrents "shooting from the clear blue sky," "black drizzling crags," giddy streams seething in the rocky depths below, and clouds drifting above, contrasts of tumult and peace, darkness and light, all appeared to him as the workings of one infinite mind—characters of the great Apocalypse — true types and symbols of Eternity.

In a letter, written to his sister, from Keswill on Lake Constance, and dated September 6, 1790, he thus describes the Lake of Como:—

"The lake is narrow, and the shadows of the mountains were early thrown across it. It was beautiful to watch them travelling up the side of the hills,—for several hours to

remark one half of a village covered with shade, and the other bright with the strongest sunshine. It was with regret that we passed every turn of this charming path, where every new picture was purchased by the loss of another which we should never have been tired of gazing upon. The shores of the lake consist of steeps covered with large, sweeping woods of chestnut, spotted with villages; some clinging from the summits of the advancing rocks, and others hiding themselves within their recesses. Nor was the surface of the lake less interesting than its shores; half of it glowing with the richest green and gold, the reflection of the illuminated wood and path, shaded with a soft blue tint. The picture was still further diversified by the number of sails which stole lazily by us as we paused in the wood above them. After all this we had the moon. It was impossible not to contrast that repose, that complacency of spirit, produced by these lovely scenes, with the sensations I had experienced two or three days before, in passing the Alps. At the Lake of Como, my mind ran through a thousand dreams of happiness, which might be enjoyed upon its banks, if heightened by conversation and the exercise of the social affections. Among the more awful scenes of the Alps I had not a thought of man, or a single created being; my whole soul was turned to Him who produced the terrible majesty before me."

Then, speaking more particularly of the sublime and beautiful scenery of Switzerland, he adds:—

"I have had, during the course of this delightful tour, a great deal of uneasiness from an apprehension of your anxiety on my account. I have thought of you perpetually; and never have my eyes burst upon a scene of particular loveliness but I have almost instantly wished that you could for a moment be transported to the place where I stood to enjoy it. . . I am a perfect enthusiast in my admiration of nature in all her various forms; and I have looked upon, and, as it were, conversed with, the objects which this country has presented to my view so long, and with such increasing pleasure, that the idea of parting from them oppresses me with a sad-

ness similar to what I have always felt in quitting a beloved friend. . . . At this moment, when many of these landscapes are floating before my mind, I feel a high enjoyment in reflecting that perhaps scarcely a day in my life will pass in which I shall not derive some happiness from these images."[1]

He had first set foot in France (July 13th 1790) on the eve of the day when Louis XVI. took the oath of fidelity to the new constitution; the whole French nation was mad with joy; and Wordsworth, like all the enthusiastic and generous, but inexperienced and rashly sanguine, young men of that time, too readily sympathized with a movement which, then, to him seemed only the sweeping away of abuses, and the giving effect to the legitimate hopes and aspirations of a down-trodden people for liberty—the longed-for dawn of that good time coming, when love should reign supreme, and "liberty, equality, and fraternity" be the order of the day. Such was the rose-water aspect under which he then regarded matters. He knew that there were many evils to be remedied, but was partially acquainted with only the mere surface of the movement; so, judging by the noble characters of the virtuous, simple, thoughtful dalesmen amongst whom he had been brought up, he, not unnaturally, though mistakenly, concluded that these zealots must of necessity be disinterested patriots; and that no Frenchmen but kings and courtiers could possibly abuse power. Such crude notions still crop up in our own day. Wordsworth, however, did not approve of violence, and hated revolution; so when he, to his horror, afterwards found that the popular democratic movement had developed into cruelty, tyranny, and licentiousness,

[1] The Prose Works of William Wordsworth. Edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart, vol. iii. pp. 226-8.

grievously disappointed, he was bitterly indignant. Loving liberty from the first to the last, he fortunately learned wisdom from experience, and slowly but surely came to regard constitutional conservatism as a much surer and safer mode of obtaining and preserving it. His one pure and ardent aim was not only consistent, but was precisely the same all through, although he had in the first instance jumped to very rash conclusions, and so, been mistaken as to the right way of attaining the desired goal.

The poem called "Descriptive Sketches," which he published three years afterwards and dedicated to his fellow-traveller Jones, is a record of this continental tour. In style it is similar to the "Evening Walk," but the language is simpler, and therefore, so far, better. He afterwards also gave an account of this tour in "The Prelude."

On returning to Cambridge, for his last term, he naturally, all things considered, was concerned about his future maintenance. All along, he had felt, and the feeling was now stronger than ever, that he was "not for that hour, nor for that place." Pilot minds seldom grind in grooves, or perch contentedly on the binnacle; but, gifted with greater vitality and with an extra capacity for very hard work of their own choosing, like sea-birds, they fly over, beyond, and far ahead,—then doubling back, on poised wing sail around the ship, and are a law unto themselves. So, Wordsworth kept on, busily shaping thoughts which, though as yet only desultory and tentative, were far-reaching, and indicated prodigious latent power, and also an innate growing belief that he had discovered, and held in his hand, a master-key which—fitting into the most intricate wards — would unlock the harmonious and symbolic meanings of the whole material universe. As he brooded over this great looming discovery, his

mind was still forming, growing, and maturing. A heavy responsibility, this, in any case; but more especially to one who strongly felt that his life was henceforth, somehow, to be devoted to the use of the said wonderful key, but who, with the bread question still unsettled and presently to be faced, did not in the very least know how this desirable consummation was to be brought about; and whose strong faith was, as yet, literally the only assurance charitably vouchsafed to hope that he should ever be permitted to use it at all. But such faith, as it generally is in men of pure heart and strong purpose, was prophetic, and after eight years fulfilled itself.

From the university proper, he had received very little that he cared to assimilate; and, the whole of the week before he graduated, he leisurely spent in reading *Clarissa Harlowe*. The only degree which he took on leaving the university, in January 1791, was the ordinary one of Bachelor of Arts; nor did he ever afterwards feel any cause for regret on the subject. Of his admirable and sensible views on education in general, we shall again have occasion to speak; meanwhile, in regard to cramming for university degrees, suffice it to say, that, as in the case of violence done to the physical system in early life by overloading the stomach and so deranging the digestive organs; or, later, by the excessive use of alcoholic stimulants, some few, on being relieved of the strain, so far get over the very injurious effects as to live to a respected old age of usefulness; but such instances, admittedly, are exceptional. So, also, it is with the majority of those who carry off the highest university honours. When the mental taper is lit long before it has had time to set and harden, it soon burns down, flickers in the socket, and expires; or when it

does not prematurely go out in darkness, men, at length, in nine cases out of ten perceive it—

"die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

In this way, prizemen, for the most part, are heard of no more. The hurtful over-stimulation of the immature growing brain is a dire and often fatal mistake, which, to put it in the mildest form, stunts and unfits it for the subsequent legitimate and mature functions of adult years. Let all outward physical conditions be of the most healthy and favourable kind; foster religion and the moral feelings; but let the pace of intellectual development be slow and natural, that it may be sure. Generally speaking, there is more hope for the future of those who are not particularly precocious: Sir Walter Scott, with a mind ever active in other directions than the groove, by his teachers, and in his classes, was accounted a dunce!

Wordsworth, looking back from a few years later on, in a noble passage, thus describes his general impression of university life—"Clothing," as Brimley who quotes it has said, "the stern denunciation of a Juvenal in language as strong as Dryden's, and as rich, sensuous, and full of meaning as Shakspere's:"—

"All degrees
And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise
Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms
Retainers won away from solid good;
And here was Labour, his own bond-slave; Hope,
That never set the pain against the prize;
Idleness, halting with his weary clog,
And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,
And simple Pleasure, foraging for Death;
Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray;

Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile,
Murmuring submission, and bald government
(The Idol weak as the idolater),
And Decency and Custom starving Truth,
And blind Authority beating with his staff
The child that might have led him; Emptiness
Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth,
Left to herself, unheard of and unknown."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### Unsettled Period. French Revolution. Politics. His Sister's Influence.

In London—Welsh Excursion—Declines a Curacy—Again visits France—French Revolution—Recalled Home—Revulsion—Liberty—Worth versus Numbers—Constitutional Conservatism—Political Principles—Religion and Morality—Perils of sweeping Change—Warning to Youth—Factious Demagogues—Stream of Tendency—Protestantism and Civil Liberty—Religious Equality—Republicanism—Wise Legislation—Robertson and Brimley on Wordsworth's Political Consistency—The Bread Question causes Anxiety—Legal Abuses and Absurdities—First Published Poems—"The Female Vagrant"—Calvert's Illness, Death, and Legacy—Dorothy Wordsworth's Soothing Influence on her Brother.

On leaving Cambridge, in January 1791, Wordsworth went to London—where he spent four months, seeing sights, wandering about the streets observing the flowing tide of humanity, haunting old book-stalls, and attending debates in the House of Commons. He heard Burke denounce the French Revolution, but, as yet, remained unconvinced by his arguments; for he regarded the movement from an impractical, unreal, perfectionist point of view, as being the precursor of universal liberty for the down-trodden nations. As an ultimate end and desirable blessing, nothing laid such a deep and lasting hold on his whole heart and soul, as true Liberty; and

this is evidenced by all he ever wrote, first to last, in her praise.

Of the orators of that period, he remarked, "You always went away from Burke, with your mind filled; from Fox, with your feelings excited; and from Pitt, with wonder at his having the power to make the worse appear the better reason."

In the month of May, Wordsworth paid a visit to his friend Jones, at Plas-yn-llan, the house of his father, in Wales, and made a pleasant excursion with him—admiring the splendour of the sunsets in the Vale of Clwyd; visiting Bethgelert, Menai, and Conway; tracing the windings of the Dee; and, when he ascended Snowdon to see the sun rise, beholding that vision of the "full-orbed moon," which he has so marvellously described near the beginning of the last book of the "Prelude," and which he makes use of to illustrate the transmuting power of imagination.

About this time, when a curacy at Harwich was placed in his offer, he was urged by his friends to enter the church. However, he modestly declined it, on the ground that "he did not feel himself good enough," that "his mind was not properly disciplined for that holy office, and, that the struggle between his conscience and his impulses would have made life a torture."

He also shrunk from Law, although Southey had frequently told him that he was "well fitted for the higher parts of the profession," because he hated its chicanery. Having studied military history, and also the art of war, he always believed that he had talents for command and a successful career in the army, but he was without the influential connections, which were then necessary to secure advancement, and he also knew that, if ordered to the West Indies, his talents would not save him from

the attacks of yellow fever, so that idea was also given up.

Every suggestion seemed attended with difficulties; for although he felt impelled towards poesy, he knew that he could not gain a maintenance by it, and, therefore, it was incumbent on him to find means of supporting himself in some other way. Meanwhile, in November of this same year, while beating about in this unsettled way, lured by the specious quest of Liberty in France, he resolved once more to cross the Channel, in order, with his own eyes, to watch the course of events which for him still possessed an intense and fascinating interest. He accordingly did so, and remained in France for fifteen months, which brought him to the end of the following year.

His early political notions, like those of nearly all young radicals, were very crude. He then credulously believed that the leaders of the Revolution, as representing the voice of the people and therefore omnipotent, would banish oppression and want from the face of the earth; and that, "if existing institutions were swept away, peace and prosperity would emerge from the ruin."

During the very month when he landed in France, the National Assembly met; Madame Roland and the Brissotins were in the ascendant; war raged in La Vendée; and the Girondists were stirring. Having spent a few days in Paris, and listened to the harangues in the National Assembly, and at the club of the Jacobins, he proceeded to Orleans, where he made the acquaintance of a republican general, Beaupuis, whom he enthusiastically admired, and not without reason, as a "philosopher, patriot, and soldier." This friend afterwards fell, fighting, while in command, on the banks of the Loire.

In the spring of 1792, Wordsworth left Orleans for Blois, and spent the summer there.

In autumn, Royalty had fallen, and the Republic was proclaimed. In September, Danton's massacres drenched the streets of Paris with blood; Robespierre arose, Deism prevailed, and a sea of sanguinary horror seethed around. One month after these fearful atrocities—in October—Wordsworth, then in his twenty-third year, left Blois and went to Paris. He wandered through the city, and visited the scenes where these demoniacal deeds had so recently been perpetrated—passing by the prison where Louis XVI., Queen Marie Antoinette, and their children then lay; visiting the Tuileries, so lately stormed; and standing in the Palace de Carrousel, where the dead and the dying had, so shortly before, lain heaped on each other. The influence of Brissot and the Girondists was already waning, and they, in turn, were, shortly after, to fall victims to the Jacobin power which they themselves had called into being.

Wordsworth describes himself as lying awake, in the high, dark, lonely garret of the hotel in Paris where he lodged, awed, and thinking of these scenes of carnage, till he seemed—

> "To hear a voice that cried
> To the whole city, 'sleep no more.'"

So deep an impression was made upon him by these terrors, that, for years after, he was often haunted in his dreams by ghastly visions of despair, tyranny, implements of death, and long vain pleadings, for innocent lives, before unjust and savage tribunals.

At Paris, from what he heard and saw, he was filled with disappointment, sorrow, and dismay. The frantic lawless movement, which, in the sanguine imagination of youthful inexperience, he had joyfully hailed, and from which he and others almost expected the regeneration of

the world, had before his eyes logically and inevitably developed into anarchy and lawless crimes of fearful and gigantic enormity, stalking by in a pageantry of blood and death.

Yet, fascinated and rivetted to the fatal spot, Wordsworth strangely wished to remain at Paris, and would have done so, probably paying the penalty of his life, had not his relatives in England seen the imminent danger of his getting involved in trouble along with his friends the Brissotins, and prudently recalled him home to England; most likely by stopping his remittances.

That he had then been mercifully rescued from an untimely end,

"Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven,"

he afterwards gratefully acknowledged.

On his return, at the close of 1792, he went to London, where, we are told, his brother Richard was then settled as a solicitor; John was at that time on his way from the Azores; Christopher was at Trinity College, Cambridge; and his sister Dorothy in the house of Dr. Cookson at Forncett, from whence, on 22d December, 1792, she writes—"William is in London; he writes to me regularly, and is a most affectionate brother." He continued to live there or elsewhere in England, in a desultory, unsettled manner, for the next three years, in a state of great uncertainty as to his future means of living. He visited friends, and made numerous excursions with his sister, who always believed in him, and, by her bright, hopeful spirit, helped him through periods of doubt and despondency,—weaning him from politics to poetry. The course of events in France had grievously disappointed him; but prejudice, youthful pride, and the leaven of his old self-willed persistency, would not at first

let him admit, even to himself, that his wild expectations had been based on sand; although he afterwards came to see things in that light, and frankly and fully acknowledged his error. This accounts for his continuing, theoretically at least, for some little time longer to uphold republicanism, notwithstanding the violent shock with which he had seen his fervent hopes, for down-trodden man, crushed, falsified, and extinguished in blood.

> "With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
> But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
> Of a false prophet,"

he saw those with whom he had sympathized, as being oppressed, themselves "become oppressors in their turn;" the scale of Liberty mounted in the eye of earth and heaven, and he "read her doom!" Though seeming fair, the flowers, alas! were poisonous, and the most tempting fruits, were only apples of Sodom. His ideals, being of the earth earthy, had crumbled into dust.

Such were the feelings with which he saw emerge from the dire conflict, "not freedom, peace, and brotherhood—but the First Consul with his armies; and the Empire, with its crushing absolutism;" while the attack on Switzerland produced a reaction on his mind that greatly tended to confirm his recovery towards political sanity.

He loved liberty more than ever, but saw, clearly, that it could not be got in that way. He had been utterly mistaken and deceived, as to the *means* for attaining it. To him, an enthusiastic, inexperienced, sanguine youth,

> "blasts
> From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven;"

and, of this revulsion of feeling and consequent change

of opinion, speaking of his return to England, he afterwards says:—

> "The tranquil shores
> Of Britain circumscribed me; else perhaps
> I might have been entangled among deeds
> Which, now, as infamous, I should abhor."

He wrote a letter to the Bishop of Llandaff in 1793, when his mind was in a transition state, apologizing for the French Revolution and avowing republican sentiments; but, at the very time, so staggered was he by the tide of events, that, instead of publishing it, as he at first intended, he wisely paused, and then quietly consigned it to his desk, where the MS. was allowed to lie till long after his death, when Dr. Grosart, in 1876, published it, for the first time. Even in it, he significantly said:—"I recoil from the very idea of a revolution. I am a determined enemy of every species of violence. . . I severely condemn all inflammatory addresses to the passions of men. I know that the multitude walk in darkness." His love of Liberty, which was a passion with him, soon led him to oppose in turn the tyranny of democracy —the worst of all tyrannies—and, in connection with which, he sorrowfully exclaimed:—

> "Liberty
> I worshipped thee, and find thee but a shade!"

The frightful enormities and excesses perpetrated on the soil of France, in her sacred name, staggered him. His bright dreams all rudely dissipated, and his fallacious hopes shattered, disappointed and sick at heart he turned his weary thoughts inward, with searching questionings which probed to the very foundations of society, and to the distinctions of right and wrong. This indeed was the crisis of his malady; and he afterwards slowly but

surely groped his way through desponding darkness approaching to despair, towards the light. His higher sympathies were henceforth gradually developed on other and different lines, which were true, natural, and satisfactory, because in harmony with the eternal laws of the universe. During the transition period of mental gloom and struggle, of which he has left us vivid records in the "Prelude" and in "The Excursion," his sister stood by him; and, but for her invaluable aid in soothing, calming, and cheering him, he might never have reached the peaceful blessed sunshine.

Equanimity restored, his judgment became matured, and his opinions, discriminating and wise. He saw that license was not only not liberty, but, so thoroughly incompatible therewith as to be destructive of it. He no longer expected collective administrative wisdom to be evolved from the votes of a multitude, when the units, of which it was composed, were not wise. He now believed in moral worth, intelligence, and position; that, from the beginning of the world, wisdom had dwelt with the few; and, at no time was he ever so far left to himself as to think, as too many now do, that numbers should be allowed to outweigh worth, although, from inexperience in his young days he had seriously and rashly blundered, by giving credit for purity of motive and patriotism, in quarters where those qualities did not exist. Ultimately he became "the constant advocate of a strong government, which should rigidly administer the institutions matured in a long course of ages, and only suffer them to be altered slowly and gradually according to the dictates of experience," instead of looking favourably on radical measures which pluck up everything by the roots, and seek to begin over again, as in France, at the year *one*.

An ardent lover of Liberty, he nevertheless came to see the danger of Licence, and the tyranny of Democracy with its tendency to destroy all existing institutions; and, to attain his original goal, he became a firm supporter of conservative policy. This outward modification of opinion, for twenty years, exposed his writings to the ungenerous attacks of certain reviewers, who — utterly unable to comprehend either the greatness and spiritual depth of his poetry, or the mature and practical wisdom of his politics—continued persistently to abuse him.

Alluding to his having been found fault with, on this score, he wrote as follows:—

"I should think that I had lived to little purpose if my notions on the subject of government had undergone no modification. My youth must, in that case, have been without enthusiasm, and my manhood endued with small capability of profiting by reflection. If I were addressing those who have dealt so liberally with the words renegade, apostate, &c., I should retort the charge upon them, and say, *you* have been deluded by *places* and *persons*, while I have stuck to *principles*. *I* abandoned France and her rulers when *they* abandoned the struggle for liberty, gave themselves up to tyranny, and endeavoured to enslave the world. I disapproved of the war against France at its commencement, thinking, which was perhaps an error, that it might have been avoided; but after Buonaparte had violated the independence of Switzerland, my heart turned against him, and against the nation that could submit to be the instrument of such an outrage. Here it was that I parted, in feeling, from the Whigs. . . This is enough for foreign politics, as influencing my attachments.[1]

"In spite of the best securities that can be given, the admission of Roman Catholics into the Legislature is a dangerous experiment. Oaths cannot be framed that will avail here; the only securities that can be relied upon are what we have

[1] From a letter, written Dec. 4, 1821, to an old friend who had alluded to his change of opinions—*Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. iii. pp. 268–70.

little hope to see—the Roman Church reforming itself, and a Ministry and a Parliament sufficiently sensible of the superiority of the one form of religion over the other to be resolved, not only to preserve the present rights and immunities of the Protestant Church inviolate, but prepared by all fair means for the extension of its influence."[1]

Again, in a letter written some years later—during the heated and protracted discussions on the question of tithes in Ireland and on Mr. Ward's well-known motion in the House of Commons for reducing the temporalities of the Protestant Establishment in that country—he says:—

"I have been convinced that the institutions of the country cannot be preserved. It is a mere question of *time*. A great majority of the present parliament, I believe, are in the main favourable to the preservation of the Church, but among those many are ignorant how that is to be done. Add to the portion of those who with good intentions are in the dark, the number who will be driven or tempted to vote against their consciences by the clamour of their sectarian and infidel constituents, and you will have a daily augmenting power, even in this parliament, which will be more and more hostile to the Church every week and every day."[2]

Among the numerous visitors who have left records of their interviews with Wordsworth, we find the following interesting account of a visit paid to Rydal Mount by Dr. Orville Dewy, of Boston, America (in 1833).

"Mr. Wordsworth converses with great earnestness, and has a habit, as he walks and talks, of stopping every fourth or fifth step, and turning round to you to enforce what he is saying.

"The subjects the first evening I passed with him were, as I have said, politics and poetry. He remarked afterward, that although he was known to the world only as a poet, he had

[1] *Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. i. p. 269 (1829).
[2] Do., vol. iii. p. 327 (May 15th, 1834).

given twelve hours' thought to the condition and prospects of society, for one, to poetry. I replied that there appeared to me to be no contradiction in this, since the spirit of poetry is the spirit of humanity, since sympathy with humanity and all its fortunes is an essential characteristic of poetry, and politics is one of the grandest forms under which the welfare of the human race presents itself. . . He says the world is running mad with the notion that all its evils are to be relieved by political changes, political remedies, political nostrums; whereas the great evils, sin, bondage, misery, lie deep in the heart, and nothing but virtue and religion can remove them; and upon the value, preciousness, and indispensableness of religion indeed, he talked very sagely, earnestly, and devoutly."

The view that Wordsworth took was not a mere question of party, or of men, but one of fundamental measures. Cromwell, the head of the Commonwealth, was one of the most Kingly men that ever ruled these realms; and, of his Latin Secretary, Wordsworth says, "Milton is falsely represented by some as a democrat. He was an aristocrat in the truest sense of the word." In the same strain, Coleridge also wrote, "Milton was a most determined aristocrat. He would have thought our popular freedom excessive. He was of opinion that the government belonged to the wise, and he thought the people fools."[1]

Wordsworth, like Milton, longed for an aristocracy of intellect and virtue that would really lead the people; such fitting leadership being a heaven-provided blessing that would effectually rescue them from being made the gregarious silly dupes of designing demagogues.

Of Wordsworth's opinions and political sympathies,

[1] Milton speaks very emphatically of the evils suffered by a nation, "unless men more than vulgar," and "bred up in the knowledge of ancient and illustrious deeds" have the conduct of its affairs. The words given within quotation marks are Milton's own.—A. J. S.

Aubrey de Vere wrote to Dr. Grosart, in communicating some recollections of the poet:—"His indignation flamed out vehemently when he heard of a base action. 'I could kick such a man across England with my naked foot,' I heard him exclaim on such an occasion. The more impassioned part of his nature connected itself especially with his political feelings. He regarded his own intellect as one which united some of the faculties which belong to the statesman with those which belong to the poet; and public affairs interested him not less deeply than poetry. It was as patriot, not poet, that he ventured to claim fellowship with Dante." Under the shadow of the stately Duomo at Florence, pensive and alone, he tells us that he stood and gazed upon the laurell'd Dante's favourite seat, regarding it as rivalling a throne; then he adds, that—

> "As a true man, who long had served the lyre,
> I gazed with earnestness, and dared no more.
> But in his breast the mighty Poet bore
> A Patriot's heart, warm with undying fire.
> Bold with the thought, in reverence I sate down,
> And, for a moment, filled that empty Throne."

"He did not accept the term 'Reformer,' because it implied an organic change in our institutions, and this he deemed both needless and dangerous; but he used to say that, while he was a decided Conservative, he remembered that to preserve our institutions we must be ever improving them. He was, indeed, from first to last, pre-eminently a patriot, an impassioned as well as a thoughtful one. Yet his political sympathies were not with his own country only, but with the progress of humanity. Till disenchanted by the excesses and follies of the first French revolution, his hopes and sympathies associated themselves ardently with the new

order of things created by it; and I have heard him say that he did not know how any generous-minded *young* man, entering on life at the time of that great uprising, could have escaped the illusion. To the end, his sympathies were ever with the cottage hearth far more than with the palace. If he became a strong supporter of what has been called 'the hierarchy of society,' it was chiefly because he believed the principle of 'equality' to be fatal to the well-being and the true dignity of the poor. Moreover, in siding politically with the crown and the coronets, he considered himself to be siding with the weaker party in our democratic days."[1]

In a private letter addressed to Lord Lonsdale, Wordsworth very nobly says:—"It has ever been the habit of my mind to trust that expediency will come out of fidelity to principles, rather than to seek my principles of action in calculations of expediency."[2]

To the Rev. J. K. Miller, vicar of Walkeringham, (on Dec. 17, 1831,) he wrote—in answer to a letter advising him to write more prose on political matters—that he had been repeatedly urged by some of his most valued friends, and at times by his own conscience, to undertake such a task; but, considering the momentousness of the subject, and his incompetence to do justice to it without extensive preparation, such as a man in his sixty-second year could not bring himself to set about, he deemed it best to keep silent. His mind was quite clearly made up as to first principles, but he did not wish these to be misunderstood or misapplied through his inadequate presentation of the truth.

"Sound minds," said he, "find their expediency in prin-

[1] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, Edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart. Vol. iii. p. 490.

[2] Do., p. 320.

ciples; unsound, their principles in expediency. On the proportion of these minds to each other, the issue depends. From calculations of partial expediency in opposition to general principles, whether those calculations be governed by fear or presumption, nothing but mischief is to be looked for; but in the present stage of our affairs, the class that does the most harm consists of *well-intentioned* men, who, being ignorant of human nature, think that they may help the thorough-paced reformers and revolutionists to a *certain* point, then stop, and that the machine will stop with them.

"After all, the question is, fundamentally, one of piety and morals; of piety, as disposing men who are anxious for social improvement to wait patiently for God's good time; and of morals, as guarding them from doing evil that good may come, or thinking that any ends *can* be so good as to justify wrong means for attaining them."

At the close of his letter he says, "You were not mistaken in your supposition that it is the habit of my mind inseparably to connect loftiness of imagination with that humility of mind which is best taught in Scripture."[1]

Emphatically basing his views of good government on Bible truth—like these far-seeing, wise, and statesman-like worthies, the old Scottish Covenanters—he everywhere insists on pure religion and sound morality as being indispensably pre-requisite to States that would attain health, happiness, and prosperity, combined with true and lasting greatness.

During the war with France, he wrote:—

"Even so doth God protect us, if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity,
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
Spake laws to them and said that by the soul
Only the Nations shall be great and free."

[1] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth.* Edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart. Vol. iii. pp. 317, 318.

His mature opinions on politics, we find well expressed in his "Sonnets dedicated to Liberty and Order."

In the sonnet, beginning—

"Blest Statesman He, whose Mind's unselfish will,"

he says—that wisdom exists not apart from magnanimity and prudence, so that good and evil may be disentangled with patient care; adding,

"What tho' assaults run high,
They daunt not him who holds his ministry,
Resolute, at all hazards, to fulfil
Its duties;—prompt to move, but firm to wait,—
Knowing, things rashly sought are rarely found:
That, for the functions of an ancient State—
Strong by her charters, free because imbound,
Servant of Providence, not slave of Fate—
*Perilous is sweeping change, all chance unsound.*"

In that, beginning,

"Who ponders National events shall find,"

he cautions rulers to beware of adding to "social havoc," when in troublous times earthquakes and hurricanes are permitted by immutable laws, amongst "feeble human kind;" asking—

"Is not Conscience ours,
And Truth, whose eye guilt only can make dim;
And Will, whose office, by divine command,
Is to control and check disordered Powers?"

In the sonnet beginning, "Long-favoured England! be not thou misled," he earnestly wrote,—

"Among thy youth
My Country! if such warning be held dear,
Then shall a Veteran's heart be thrilled with joy,
One who would gather from eternal truth,

For time and season, rules that work to cheer—
Not scourge, to save the people—not destroy."

And in "The Warning," he also finely says, in language which is now even more applicable than at the time when it was written,—

"If cowardly concession still must feed
The thirst for power in men who ne'er concede;
Nor turn aside, unless to shape a way
For domination at some riper day;
If generous Loyalty must stand in awe
Of subtle Treason, in his mask of law,
Or with bravado insolent and hard,
Provoking punishment, to win reward;
If office help the factious to conspire,
And they who *should* extinguish fan the fire—
Then, will the sceptre be a straw, the crown
Sit loosely, like the thistle's crest of down;
To be blown off at will, by Power that spares it
In cunning patience, from the head that wears it.
Lost people, trained to theoretic feud!
Lost above all, ye labouring multitude!
Bewildered whether ye, by slanderous tongues
Deceived, mistake calamities for wrongs
And over fancied usurpations brood;
. . . . .
Or, to the giddy top of self-esteem
By flatterers carried, mount into a dream
Of boundless suffrage, at whose sage behest
Justice shall rule, disorder be supprest,
And every man sit down as Plenty's Guest!
—O for a bridle bitted with remorse
To stop your Leaders in their headstrong course!
Oh may the Almighty scatter with His grace
These mists, and lead you to a safer place,
By paths no human wisdom can foretrace!
May He pour round you, from worlds far above
Man's feverish passions, his pure light of love,

That quietly restores the natural mien
To hope, and makes truth willing to be seen!
. . . . . .
Be strong in faith, bid anxious thoughts be still;
Seek for the good and cherish it—the ill
Oppose, or bear with a submissive will."

A careful observer of "the mighty stream of tendency," which he clearly saw was rapidly and dangerously hurrying on towards democracy, he raised his earnest thoughtful voice, if possible, to arrest it and save his country.

He also, unlike those Romanizing high-churchmen of the present day who systematically repudiate the word "Protestant," solemnly warned his chloroformed countrymen against the present persistent and insidious sapping and mining of our civil and religious liberties, by the Church of Rome. On purely civil grounds, he rightly maintained that those who regarded the pontiff as placed supreme above all governments, and who were taught that, in accordance with this his high and inalienable prerogative, it was doing God service to dethrone heretics, could not rightly legislate for, and therefore ought not to be allowed to mar the legislation of a Protestant Empire.

Wordsworth having a knowledge of history, possessing ample opportunities of personal observation, and with a tolerant mind singularly free from religious prejudices, approved and admired the shrewd common-sense view taken by the framers of the old Solemn League and Covenant. He held that the admission of Roman Catholics into Parliament was worse than a blunder, and would logically and inevitably lead to the subversion of the constitution, by placing power in the hands of those who would certainly unite to sway the balance in the interests of Rome, where the two great parties of state are so equally

divided; and who, Rome being always paramount, would on occasion side with either party. Wordsworth held that three great conflicts were before the nations: between Christianity and Infidelity; Popery and Protestantism; Monarchy and Republicanism; and that, through Ireland, Rome would seek to regain her lost influence.

As far back as 1820, he foretold what we now designate the "Home Rule Movement," and the demand for the separation of Ireland from England; and subsequently, in a letter to Mrs. Hemans, he expressed the opinion that "these two Islands are likely to reap the fruit of their own folly and madness, in becoming, for the present generation, the two most unquiet and miserable spots upon the earth."

With his usual penetration and sagacity he also foresaw, sixty years ago, the agitation now going on amongst us for the Disestablishment of the National Churches, and sorrowfully regarded the "severance of Religion from the State" as "only a question of time."

"For the preservation of the Church Establishment," said he, "all men, whether they belong to it or not, could they perceive their true interest would be strenuous. . . The Church of England, as to the point of private judgment, standing between the two extremes of Papacy and Dissent, is entitled to heartfelt reverence; and among thinking men, whose affections are not utterly vitiated, never fails to receive it. Papacy will tolerate no private Judgment, and Dissent is impatient of anything else."[1]

Writing of his Ecclesiastical Sonnets, Wordsworth says:

"I have also added two, in order to do more justice to the Papal Church for the services which she did actually render to Christianity and humanity in the Middle Ages."

And, speaking of religion in the country districts of France, he said—

[1] *Prose Writings of William Wordsworth*, vol. i. 263–4.

"He had known many of the abbés and other ecclesiastics, and thought highly of them as a class; they were earnest faithful men."

But, having also seen another side of the Roman Catholic system, he declared that—

"Intelligent lovers of freedom are, from necessity, bold and hardy lovers of truth." . . "Its ambition is upon record; it is essentially at enmity with light and knowledge; its power to exclude these blessings is not so great as formerly, though its desire to do so is equally strong, and its determination to exert its power for its own exaltation by means of that exclusion is not in the least abated. The See of Rome justly regards England as the head of Protestantism; it admires, it is jealous, it is envious of her power and greatness. It despairs of being able to destroy them, but it is ever on the watch to regain its lost influence over that country; and it hopes to effect this through means of Ireland. . . A separation of the two countries the ultimate aim;" and "religious equality" leading to the removal of "the present Protestant barrier," by "alteration of the Coronation Oath." . . "In defending a government resting upon a Protestant basis—which, say what they will, the other party have abandoned—we are working for the welfare of human kind."

Of Wordsworth's sentiments, his nephew has justly said:

"He would have been among the first to hail the concession of such relief to the Romanists, if such relief had been, in his opinion, consistent with due regard to the maintenance of the institutions of the country. But he regarded the removal of Romish disabilities as opening the way to Romish domination; and he apprehended that they who were advocating such a removal, on the plea of civil liberty, were unconsciously promoting the cause of spiritual tyranny."[1]

Southey, when speaking of various forms of government, said, "There is no doubt, a republic is the best

[1] *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (by his Nephew), vol. ii. p. 149.

form of government in itself—as a sun-dial is in itself the most certain and perfect instrument for ascertaining the hour. And if the sun shone always, men would never have been at the trouble of making clocks. . But, as it is, these instruments are in most frequent use. If mankind were illuminated by the pure sun of reason, they would dispense with complicated forms of government."

In short, theory and practice must go together; and, while human nature remains as it is, restraints for those who would abuse liberty are quite as necessary on the one hand, as, on the other, perfect freedom is to those who can wisely enjoy it; thus, in proper legislation, both classes, of necessity, have to be taken into account.

In Wordsworth's *Sonnets on National Liberty and Independence* observe the great stress which he everywhere lays on *Moral Force.* The late Rev. F. W. Robertson of Brighton, whose standpoint was in many respects widely different from that of Wordsworth, generously and ably asserts and vindicates the political consistency of the poet's inner life; reminding us that "there are two kinds of truth—the one is the truth of fact, the other is ideal truth, and these are not one, they are often opposite to each other. . . I say, therefore, that in Wordsworth's most democratic days he was aristocratic in heart, and in his most aristocratic days he had all that was most generous, and all that was most aspiring in the democratic mind. Wordsworth's patriotism ever possessed," continues Robertson, "that intense and deep love for England, in which aristocrat and democrat are blended in the formation of one high-minded man;" and, in reference to the sonnet beginning,

"Vanguard of Liberty, ye Men of Kent,"

he also writes:—"It does the heart good to read these

firm and pure, and true and manly words, issuing from the lips of one who was not ashamed to love his country with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength; a man whose every word, and every thought, and every act, were the words, and thoughts, and acts of a manly, true-spirited, high-minded Englishman!"

And the gifted George Brimley has well said of Wordsworth: "His early association with Coleridge, too, tended to open to him the deep foundations on which our National Institutions rest, and to inspire him with reverence for them, and a cautious fear of weakening them by attempts at improvement. If, however, any person is inclined to call him reactionist and bigot, we would only remark that there are three classes of politicians—those who under the pressure of an existing evil seek for a change without the faculty of discerning to what that change will inevitably lead, ignorant, in fact, of the law of development which links together political events and gives unity to history,—those who with conscious and definite aim, plant the great hereafter in the now, and are not consequently liable to be startled and terrified, and driven into reaction by the results of their own actions;—and thirdly, those who with clear eye discern the dependence of the hereafter upon the now, and because they shrink from the hereafter, refuse to take the step which renders it inevitably certain. To the last class belonged William Wordsworth."[1]

In electing to touch on Wordsworth's political views at this early stage of his biography, when as yet they were only transforming from the grub to the winged state, we have had so far to anticipate the mature opinions of his prime,

[1] *Essays by the late George Brimley, M.A., Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge.* Macmillan & Co., London. 2d ed. p. 182–3.

and of his later years, in order to exhibit the logical and consistent bearings of his transition from Republicanism to Conservatism, as well as the causes which slowly but surely led to that result.

Before passing from this subject, we would remark—that with the courage of settled opinions came fulness of faith and profound humility. Though troubled and perplexed by the passing of measures, the tendency of which he clearly saw to be wrong, he was still hopeful that error might ultimately be overruled for good; and in writing to a friend at a time of great public excitement, he added:—

"After all (as an excellent bishop of the Scotch Church said to a friendly correspondent of mine), 'Be of good heart; the affairs of the world will be conducted as heretofore,—by the foolishness of man, and the wisdom of God.'"[1]

We now resume our narrative, returning again, in chronological order, to the unsettled time between his leaving the University and his settling down at Grasmere with his sister, the special period (1791–5) to which this chapter more particularly refers.

Wordsworth now felt more and more drawn towards poetry; there was that within him which yearned for higher utterance, together with a consciousness, on his part, of power to utter it. His sister, who was ever the good angel at his side, also firmly believing *that* to be his mission, encouraged him to cultivate the Muses, and to be hopeful as to the future. However, in the meantime, of necessity, the bread question must be considered, and at no time did he ever expect to gain a livelihood by verse. His past career was, not unnaturally, looked upon, by his guardians, as a failure; for it had led to no settled pursuit,

[1] *The Prose Writings of William Wordsworth.* Edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart. Vol. iii. p. 401.

or even to the prospect of any. They were puzzled, and did not well know what to make of him; and he himself, ill at ease, was getting anxious with regard to his maintenance, the thought being expressed in the lines:—

"My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can he expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?"

Wordsworth had, hitherto, been almost entirely dependent on his relatives; for the large sum due to his late father's estate by the Earl of Lonsdale had not yet been recovered; and the legal steps, resorted to by the trustees, were abandoned, after expending the greater part of what little patrimony remained to the orphans, in the fruitless endeavour to enforce their just rights. Smarting under this doubly aggravating experience, Wordsworth, thus significantly alludes to the abuses of law, in his letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, from which we have already quoted:—

"I congratulate your Lordship upon your enthusiastic fondness for the judicial proceedings of this country. I am happy to find you have passed through life without having your fleece torn from your back in the thorny labyrinth of litigation. But you have not lived always in colleges, and must have passed by some victims, whom it cannot be supposed, without a reflection on your heart, that you have forgotten. . . As a member of the assembly which, from a confidence in its experience, sagacity, and wisdom, the Constitution has invested with the supreme appellant jurisdiction to determine the most doubtful points of an intricate juris-

prudence, your Lordship cannot, I presume, be ignorant of the consuming expense of our never-ending process, the verbosity of unintelligible statutes, and the perpetual contrariety in our judicial decisions."

Wordsworth's trenchant denunciation of legal abuses will be heartily endorsed by any who have been so unfortunate as to have had experiences, in any respect, similar to his own.

At this juncture, in order to show his relatives that he was not without abilities of some sort, he resolved to publish two poems which he had lying past him; these were "The Evening Walk," and "Descriptive Sketches," to which allusion has already been made. They attracted little public attention, but are interesting as the first-fruits of a great poet; and also as having been highly thought of by Coleridge, then an undergraduate at Cambridge. When the poems fell into his hands, he at once recognized in them the germs of a new order of poetry, in the process of maturing, and boldly asserted, in the *Biographia Literaria*, "Seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."

To the publication of these poems, Wordsworth was afterwards indebted for the friendship of Coleridge, which he acknowledges to have been of incalculable service to him.

Referring to such times of anxiety, in a later poem called "Resolution and Independence," he records how, in a moment of despondency, he was cheered by an example of simple trust in Providence displayed by the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor.

In the summer of 1793, he was in the Isle of Wight, with Mr. William Calvert, a friend; and, after leaving it, spent two days wandering on foot over the dreary waste

of Salisbury Plain, on his way by Bath, Bristol, and Tintern, up the Wye, to North Wales.

On Salisbury Plain, he wrought at a poem, which was completed during the following year and afterwards published in part under the title of "The Female Vagrant," but which was latterly called "Guilt and Sorrow." The chief incidents in it, Wordsworth tells us, are taken from real life. According to the *Quarterly Review* of later years, it marked a decided advance in his style.

There is an exquisite simplicity and polish in the language, which is neither bald nor verbose. The landscape painting has a bright transparency, and there is a deep and genuine pathos in the human part of the poem. The plot is ineffective, but the details are interesting. To be appreciated, the poem must be read with patient tranquillity, for its beauties are of that quiet order which escape a hasty eye.

In the sad tale, how sweetly the vagrant recalls her peaceful, happy past!—Girlhood; her good father hearing her say her prayers; her love of reading; and her garden "stored with pease, and mint, and thyme, and rose, and lily, for the Sabbath morn;" with "the Sabbath bells, and their delightful chime;" but now, in her loneliness and distress, friendless and weeping, she turns away, to wander across the moor.

In February 1794 he visited Mr. Rawson, at Halifax, chiefly to see his sister, who had been brought up by Mrs. Rawson, formerly Miss Threlkeld, who was her cousin. From Halifax, he and Dorothy took coach to Kendal, and walked thence to Grasmere and Keswick, in the neighbourhood of which they spent some weeks, living in a farm-house.

In May, when Wordsworth was at his uncle Richard's, we find him proposing, to his friend Mathews, to start a

monthly periodical—a political and literary miscellany. The title was to be "The Philanthropist," but the project fell through.

In November of that same year, from Keswick, he writes to his friend Mathews, who was at that time connected with the press, requesting him to endeavour to procure for him an engagement to write on a newspaper, as he had at length resolved to come to London, and try what could be done in that way. At the close of his letter he says, referring to his brother Christopher, "He is a lad of talents, and industrious withal. This same industry is a good old Roman quality, and nothing is to be done without it."

While waiting for a reply to his application, he was engaged in attending a sick young friend, Raisley Calvert, of whom he wrote to Mathews, two days after the despatch of his former letter, on November 9, 1794:—"My friend (Calvert) has every symptom of a confirmed consumption, and I cannot think of quitting him in his present debilitated state." Again, two months later, on January 7th (1795), he writes, from lodgings at Penrith:—"I have been here for some time. I am still much engaged with my sick friend; and sorry am I to add that he worsens daily. . . He is barely alive."

Shortly after this, Calvert died; and it was found, on opening his will, that he had bequeathed nine hundred pounds to his friend Wordsworth who had nursed him during his sickness.

Calvert, a young man much in the same position of life as Wordsworth, was the son of R. Calvert, steward to the Duke of Norfolk. He did not write verses, but he could appreciate genius, and believed that Wordsworth, if allowed freely to follow the bent of his mind, would yet do great things for the world; and so, he had a double

motive for promoting his friend's happiness, by this very timely aid.

In this way Wordsworth was providentially and narrowly saved from anxieties which, for long, had been heavily weighing on him, and so enabled to follow the bent of his genius. Otherwise, his life would, most likely, have been spent in writing newspaper leaders, instead of giving the world that, which is now acknowledged to be the highest exponent of the spiritual in the poetry of the nineteenth century.

In "The Prelude," Wordsworth has left a record of his gratitude to Calvert, for thus enabling him to pause for choice, and effectually clearing a passage for him, so that the stream might flow according to Nature's bent; in the following sonnet, he also simply tells the story:—

TO THE MEMORY OF RAISLEY CALVERT.

Calvert! it must not be unheard by them
Who may respect my name, that I to thee
Owed many years of early liberty.
This care was thine when sickness did condemn
Thy youth to hopeless wasting, root and stem:
That I, if frugal and severe, might stray
Where'er I liked; and finally array
My temples with the muse's diadem.
Hence, if in freedom I have loved the truth,
If there be aught of pure, or good, or great,
In my past verse; or shall be, in the lays
Of higher mood, which now I meditate,—
It gladdens me, O worthy, short-lived youth!
To think how much of this will be thy praise.

Now, wholly free to devote himself to that which he felt to be his special calling, with clear purpose, persistent and unwavering aim, conscious power, and strictly economical habits, Wordsworth was able to settle down

with his sister, in the autumn of 1795, at Racedown Lodge, near Crewkerne, in Dorsetshire, and to live contentedly, there and elsewhere, for between seven and eight years, turning out good and noble work, on a joint income of less than a hundred a year.

His sister, henceforth, devoted herself entirely to him; and her benign influence effectually turned his thoughts from vexing politics back to soothing nature, and from loud zealots to the quiet virtuous home-lives of the happy contented dalesmen; and so she was the means of cooling down his fevered spirit, both restoring his mind to tone, and inducing tune.

"He ceased to admire strength detached from moral purpose, and learned to prize unnoticed worth, the meek virtues and lowly charities. He now loathed the ambitious projects which had lately deceived him."

Of his sister, to whom he was tenderly attached, he always speaks with the highest admiration, and she was worthy of it all. Nearly two years younger than himself, she possessed fine sensibilities, and was endued "with an exquisite perception of beauty, with a retentive recollection of what she saw, with a felicitous tact in discerning, and admirable skill in delineating natural objects, with graphic accuracy and vivid gracefulness."

Through her soothing influence, his mind recovered its natural healthy tone; and finding "good sense, and true love, and the bloom of affection amongst the lowly and souls sanctified by duty, patience, and sorrow, he resolved to sing of these." Her presence coloured his whole life. "When roaming, he was drawn in by every eddy and influenced by every wind; but when once he had escaped from the turmoil into the pure and peaceful pleasures of domestic existence, he felt the vanity and vexation of his previous course."

Wordsworth thanked God that his beloved sister, in the days when despondency was stealing over his heart, whispered cheeringly that brightness would return; and, so, did much to maintain for him a saving intercourse with his true self, and in the midst of all preserved him still a poet, and made him seek his office on earth under that name alone.

It was to her he addressed the following appreciative and grateful lines:—

> "I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
> And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton sings,
> Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
> This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!
> My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
> In her original self too confident,
> Retained too long a countenance severe;
> A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
> Familiar, and a favourite of the stars:
> But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
> Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
> And teach the little birds to build their nests
> And warble in its chambers. . . . .
> When every day brought with it some new sense
> Of exquisite regard for common things,
> And all the earth was budding with these gifts
> Of more refined humanity, thy breath,
> Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring
> That went before my steps."

# CHAPTER V.

## Racedown—Alfoxden—Lyrical Ballads.

Situation of Racedown Lodge—Satires—Tragedy of "The Borderers"—"The Old Cumberland Beggar"—"Yew-tree Seat"—Poetry now forms the Business of his Life—Matter, Manner, and Aim of Poetry—Makes Coleridge's acquaintance—Miss Wordsworth—"The Story of Margaret"—Alfoxden—Society there—Cottle—Philosopher's Dinner—Growing Difficulties—Walking Tours—"The Ancient Mariner"—Lyrical Ballads—Spynosey—Wordsworth driven from Alfoxden—"Peter Bell"—"We are Seven"—"Simon Lee"—"Expostulation and Reply"—"The Tables Turned"—Howitt, on Quakerism in Wordsworth's Poetry—"Sunrise"—"To my Sister"—"Lines written in Early Spring"—"Tintern Abbey."

Racedown Lodge, near Crewkerne, Dorsetshire, where Wordsworth and his sister set up house together in the autumn of 1795, was the first home either of them had, since the family were scattered at the death of their parents.

It was a pleasant house situated in a delightful country, with a good garden. Around were charming walks, lovely meadows, and lofty *Combs* commanding the fine scenery of the district, and Dorothy speaks, in raptures, of "a view of the sea from Lambert's Castle." There happened to be a plentiful supply of books in the house, and literary labour was diversified with reading the Italian poets together, gardening, climbing the Combs, or wandering over the meadows, so that, contented with "plain living," the poet had at last found a resting-place with adequate means and opportunity for "high thinking," in close communion with nature.

His sister, with fine perceptive powers, deep sensibilities, and quick sympathies, was an invaluable other-self to him; for her true genius, while generally resembling, was, in those colours where it differed, only the harmonious complement of his own.

Wordsworth at first began to write a series of satires, in imitation of Juvenal, fiercely assailing the vices of the time in vigorous verse. This exercise of the faculties, in a totally different direction, served as a safety-valve for his own disappointed feelings in regard to politics. But he did not let these satires see the light; and, when subsequently applied to, refused to allow them to be published—having, as he said, quite resolved in future to steer clear of all such personal attacks. He had kept no copy of them, and requested that the MSS. should be destroyed. He then completed "Guilt and Sorrow"—the poem in Spenserian stanza which he had composed on Salisbury Plain, and which was decidedly in advance of anything he had hitherto written. He next wrote "The Borderers —A Tragedy," begun in the autumn of 1795, and completed the following year. It was offered to the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, but not having been written with any view to stage representation it was rejected as unsuitable, thrown aside, and not published till fifty years afterwards. It contains several fine studies of character, but, though reflective, it lacks dramatic power, consequently was a failure, and is seldom read.

About this time, he wrote "The Old Cumberland Beggar," an admirable descriptive poem, appealing to our sympathies for the poor, the aged, and the infirm, both for their sakes, and our own—it being more blessed to give than to receive. Wishing the mendicant a blessing, as he goes his stated rounds to certain houses on certain fixed days, when he is looked for, Wordsworth hopes that the poor old man may never be shut up in a workhouse; but may still, unblamed and uninjured, continue to "prompt the unlettered villagers to tender offices and pensive thoughts," concluding thus:—

"Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!
And, long as he can wander, let him breathe
The freshness of the valleys; let his blood
Struggle with frosty air and winter snows;
And let the chartered wind that sweeps the heath
Beat his gray locks against his withered face.
Reverence the hope whose vital anxiousness
Gives the last human interest to his heart.
May never House, misnamed of Industry,
Make him a captive! for that pent-up din,
Those life-consuming sounds that clog the air,
Be his the natural silence of old age!
Let him be free of mountain solitudes;
And have around him, whether heard or not
The pleasant melody of woodland birds.
Few are his pleasures: if his eyes have now
Been doomed so long to settle on the earth
That not without some effort they behold
The countenance of the horizontal sun,
Rising or setting, let the light at least
Find a free entrance to their languid orbs.
And let him, *where* and *when* he will, sit down
Beneath the trees, or by the grassy bank
Of highway side, and with the little birds
Share his chance-gathered meal; and, finally,
As in the eye of nature he has lived,
So in the eye of nature let him die!"

In this poem, Charles Lamb discriminately remarks of "the delicate and curious feeling, in the wish for the 'Cumberland Beggar,' that he may have about him the melody of birds, altho' he hear them not," that "here the mind knowingly passes a fiction upon herself, first substituting her own feelings for the Beggar's, and in the same breath detecting the fallacy, will not part with the wish."

In 1795, Wordsworth also wrote "Lines left upon a

Seat in a Yew-tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the shore, commanding a beautiful Prospect." From this sage poem—which is all the more remarkable as being the production of a young man of five-and-twenty, who had, shortly before, been deceived into sympathizing with the French Revolution, but, shocked and cured by its wild excesses, had been led to look within and to set greater store than ever on moral force—we make the following quotation:—

> "If thou be one whose heart the holy forms
> Of young imagination have kept pure,
> Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know that pride,
> Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,
> Is littleness; that he who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> Which he has never used; that thought with him
> Is in its infancy. The man whose eye
> Is ever on himself doth look on one,
> The least of nature's works, one who might move
> The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
> Unlawful, ever. O be wiser, thou!
> Instructed that true knowledge leads to love,
> True dignity abides with him alone
> Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
> Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
> In lowliness of heart."

Wordsworth, calmly taking into account the function and consecrated aim of the highest poetry, truly called poets "teachers," and "prophets of nature," speaking—

> "A lasting inspiration, sanctified
> By reason, blest by faith."

From the time of his settling down at Racedown, onwards, "like a star, without rest and without haste," he steadily continued to prosecute poetry as the business of

his life. Taking the greatest masters as his models of style and diction, he carefully continued to educate himself for the conscientious fulfilment of what he, now, more and more, felt to be his mission.

He held—that, as poets did not write only for poets but also for mankind in general, the language which they employed, even in uttering the deepest truth, should therefore be simple, plain, direct, and such as everybody could understand. In regard to this particular feature, after Chaucer, he acknowledged his obligations to Cowper; and also very specially and repeatedly to Burns, for whose truth, simplicity, and natural feeling, he expressed a very great admiration, as, for instance, in the following stanza:—

> "I mourned with thousands, but as one
> More deeply grieved, for *he* was gone
> Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
> And showed my youth
> How verse may build a princely throne
> On humble truth."

It is worth noting that Wordsworth was only eleven years younger than Burns, and published his first volume in the year 1793, when the great Scottish poet—the greatest song writer the world has ever seen—was issuing the third edition of his poems, in which "Tam o' Shanter," written at Ellisland, appeared for the first time; and that Wordsworth was six-and-twenty, when Burns died at Dumfries in his thirty-seventh year.

Matthew Arnold says,—"Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him.

> 'The poor inhabitant below
> Was quick to learn and wise to know,

And keenly felt the friendly glow
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low
And stain'd his name.'

Every one will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth; and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him."

So much for manner; while, taking the subject-matter and aim into account, it is evident that the function of the poet is no trivial affair, and his duty no sinecure.

The subject-matter of poetry—derived from Nature, Man, and God—is the physical, intellectual, and moral beauty of the universe: its end the elevation of the soul.

Milton said—that, in comparison with Science, Poetry is "simple, sensuous, and passionate" (or impassioned); that is to say—remarked Coleridge, by way of paraphrase —"single in conception, abounding in sensible images, and informing them all with the spirit of the mind."

Ruskin says, that poets of the first order, are "men who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly." And Trench affirms, "The loftiest poetry is not merely passion and imagination, but these moving in the sphere of highest truth." Viewing things largely and relatively, the Poet presents them to view in their totality; for he is

"No mere child of Time,
But offspring of the Eternal Prime."

While many things may be affirmed of poetry, or brought forward to illustrate it, it is impossible to give any definition which is exhaustive; for poetry is the action of the highest thought and deepest feeling, in regard to outward Nature, and to Man, as viewed in their

harmonious co-relationship to each other and to the great Creator, for the evolving of spirit-truth; such action being, imaginatively, emotionally, and musically expressed by the truest and best words, in perfectly rhythmical language. "Poetry," said Shelley, "lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world;" it rather removes films from the eyes that look. Love is its source, and love is its end. It perceives subtle analogies in things that differ, and that "contrast itself is a kind of relation." It seeks to atone nature, thought, and action, while ascending the stream of being towards unity. Finding the ultimate chord of the universe, the poet joins in its harmonies. Every true touch on the poet's lyre awakes sympathetic vibrations, which, rising in harmonic waves, pulse, for ever on, throughout the sentient universe.[1]

Fortunately, we are not left merely to infer that Wordsworth fully realized the sanctity and responsibility attached to his singing robes; for, in writing to his friend Lady Beaumont, he reverently says:—"It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world; among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society.

"This is a truth, and an awful one; because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in any sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God." He then confidently adds, in words which cannot be too strongly emphasized on account of their absolute and essential truth, that he calmly waited, hoping and trusting, whatever the prejudiced and worldly-minded might then say of them, that the destiny of his own poems

[1] See *The Beautiful in Nature, Art, and Life*, by the present writer, vol. i. p. 444, and, elsewhere in that work where Poetry is treated of.

would be:—"*To console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and to feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous;* this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves."

Wordsworth, elsewhere, speaking of poetry, gives us a fine critical passage, affording a veritable glimpse into his own study of imagination, the careful perusal of which may be of considerable use to the reader, by throwing light on the many beautiful illustrations of poetic art, yet to follow from his own pen:—

"Aristotle, I have been told, hath said, that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing. It is so. Its object is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth, which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature; poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakspere hath said of man, that 'he looks before and after.' He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together, by passion and knowledge, the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time. The objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the

eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."

In June 1797 Coleridge came from Bristol to Racedown to visit Wordsworth for the first time. He was two and a half years younger than Wordsworth, and the two poets were mutually pleased with each other;

"And, sooth, these two were to each other dear."

Miss Wordsworth describes Coleridge as "a wonderful man," "benevolent, good-tempered, and cheerful," and his conversation teeming with "soul, mind, and spirit." Wordsworth described him as "a noticeable man with large grey eyes," having a pale face and profound forehead, but appearing "depressed with the weight of musing fantasy." He afterwards thus addressed Coleridge—

"capacious soul
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love!"

and said of him—"He is the most wonderful man I have ever known, . . wonderful for the originality of his mind, and the power he possessed of throwing out in profusion grand central truths, from which might be evolved the most comprehensive systems. . . He and my sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted."

In a letter to Cottle, speaking of this visit, Coleridge wrote of Wordsworth:—"I speak with heartfelt sincerity and unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I felt a little man by his side."

Like Wordsworth, and Southey, and many other gifted

young men of that period, Coleridge had, at first, been deceived and beguiled into regarding the French Revolution with favourable eyes, and dreaming of liberty, some of them had formed a utopian scheme of emigrating to the banks of the Susquehanna, there to found an ideal Pantisocracy. However, the project fortunately had failed, through lack of funds. Wordsworth never had anything to do with this scheme; it exploded before he knew the circle. Southey and Coleridge married two sisters; castles in the air had to be abandoned; and, following the wiser dictates of common sense, they quietly settled down at home as constitutional and loyal British subjects.

Speaking of Miss Wordsworth, Coleridge, in 1797, writes from Stowey to Cottle:—"Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed, in mind I mean, and in heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman you would think her ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman you would think her pretty, but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her innocent soul outbeams so brightly. . . Her information various; her eye watchful in minutest observation of Nature; and her taste a perfect electrometer."

Coleridge spoke in very high terms of the blank verse which Wordsworth read to him; characterizing it as "superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which in any way resembles it." From Miss Wordsworth's journal, we learn that the first thing that was read to Coleridge after he came, was her brother's new poem, the "Ruined Cottage," or "The Story of Margaret," which now stands in the first book of "The Excursion," and is there so touchingly told by the "Wanderer." It begins with the following lines—

"'Twas summer, and the sun had mounted high:
Southward the landscape indistinctly glared
Through a pale steam; but all the northern downs,
In clearest air ascending, showed far off
A surface dappled o'er with shadows flung
From brooding clouds."

The pleasant intercourse which the Wordsworths and Coleridge enjoyed made them long to be nearer each other; and, a month after, in July 1797, Wordsworth and his sister removed from Racedown to Alfoxden, a beautiful and romantic spot, which was within three miles of Nether Stowey in Somersetshire, where Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge resided. Alfoxden was a large house charmingly situated on a slope at the extreme end of the Quantock Hills, and within sight of the Bristol Channel which was only a quarter of a mile distant. Near it was a dense shadowy wood of old oaks and gigantic holly-trees "as wild as fancy ever painted;" and close by, a deep narrow wooded glen with crystal water, rushing along the white pebbly bed of the stream below, and singing its way to the sea. There could not have been a finer, or more pleasantly secluded residence for a poet, than Alfoxden, with its sunny flower-garden below, at the end of the house; an extensive lawn ascending behind; clumps of old wooding around; sequestered ferny dells with deer-herds and flocks of sheep; and a view of the sea, in front, with the Welsh hills stretching away in the distance. During the minority of the heir, the house, furnished as it stood, was let to them for a year at a moderate rent, and Wordsworth describes that year as a delightfully pleasant and productive period. Though quite in the country, they were in the neighbourhood of Bristol and were not without choice society. Thomas Poole, of Nether Stowey, a gentleman of property, a

magistrate, and a man of refined taste, had invited Coleridge from Bristol to visit him, which he did; and, after Coleridge's marriage, he induced him to settle at Stowey. Poole was a friend of Josiah and Thomas Wedgewood the great potters of Staffordshire, and, having introduced Coleridge to them, they eventually settled on him an annuity of £150 a year. Charles Lloyd a young poet, the son of the Quaker banker of Birmingham, and with whom, and with Coleridge, Lamb had conjointly published his first volume, then lodged with Coleridge; Lovell, another young Quaker friend, was frequently of their party, and genial Charles Lamb—who, like Coleridge, had been a Blue-coat Boy—also visited them from London.

Thus, Poole had attracted the Coleridges to Stowey; and these in turn drew Southey and Wordsworth to the neighbourhood. Coleridge was a native of Devonshire, Southey of Bristol, and Wordsworth of Cumberland.

Cottle—the Bristol bookseller who had the honour of issuing to the world the first publications of Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth, and so assisting them when money was not too plenty with any of them—gives an amusing account of a dinner at Wordsworth's. Through visiting Coleridge at Stowey, he had first been introduced to Wordsworth, who, happening afterwards to be in Bristol, invited him to spend a few days at Alfoxden. Cottle accepted the invitation and drove Wordsworth down in his gig, calling on the way at Stowey for Coleridge, Miss Wordsworth and Betty the servant, who all three walked the remaining distance alongside. A sturdy beggar, whom Wordsworth had relieved on the road, ungratefully stole a junk of cheese which he was conveying home, and by an unlucky series of misfortunes other viands provided for dinner got lost or broken, so that, on reaching Alfoxden,

the hungry philosophers had to dine contentedly on a superb brown loaf, a pile of true Cos lettuces from the well-stocked kitchen-garden, and a plentiful supply of pure cold sparkling spring water.

There was no sauce for the lettuces, and a general laugh followed when Betty, on being asked to bring salt for the lettuces, said that she had quite forgotten to buy it!

The following droll incident, which had occurred before dinner on their arrival at Alfoxden, is thus related by Cottle:—"I led the horse to the stable, where a fresh perplexity arose. I removed the harness without difficulty, but after many strenuous attempts, I could not get off the collar. In despair, I called for assistance, when aid soon drew near. Mr. Wordsworth first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but, after several unsuccessful efforts, he relinquished the achievement as altogether impracticable. Mr. Coleridge now tried his hand, but showed no more grooming skill than his predecessors; for, after twisting the poor horse's neck, almost to strangulation, and to the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that the horse's head must have grown—gout or dropsy! since the collar was put on! 'For,' said he, 'it is a downright impossibility for such a huge *os frontis* to pass through so narrow a collar!' Just at this instant, the servant girl came near, and understanding the cause of our consternation, 'La! master,' said she, 'you do not go about the work in the right way. You should do like this;' when, turning the collar completely upside down, she slipped it off in a moment, to our great humiliation and wonderment; each satisfied, afresh, that there were heights of knowledge in the world to which he had not attained."

Miss Wordsworth, in addition to her fine qualities of

mind and heart, was an excellent pedestrian, a practised mountaineer—

> "Fleet and strong,
> And down the rocks could leap along
> Like rivulets in May,"

so that she could accompany her brother on his longest expeditions. She, Wordsworth, and Coleridge were in the habit of going off together; and, on setting out on one of these pedestrian tours, when roving on the Quantock Hills in November 1797, it was proposed that the two bards should raise five pounds for defraying the expense of it by writing a joint poem for the *New Monthly Magazine*. This was the origin of the "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner." However, ere they had gone very far with the composition their respective manners proved to be so different that it was found inexpedient to proceed in that way, so the Mariner was left to Coleridge, in whose hands its length soon outgrew the limits originally proposed.

A joint volume was now thought of instead, and, so, the *Lyrical Ballad* venture was projected. Coleridge undertook to write poems introducing the supernatural or romantic element; while Wordsworth, following the bent of his own mind, was to give the charm of novelty to things of every-day life, and to direct the mind to "the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us." Coleridge furnished three, and Wordsworth twenty. Amongst the latter were "The Female Vagrant," which had been previously written; "The Idiot Boy;" "Her Eyes are Wild;" "We are Seven;" "The Thorn;" "Goody Blake and Harry Gill;" "Simon Lee;" "Expostulation and Reply;" "The Tables Turned;" "A Whirl-blast;" "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman;" "The Last of the Flock;" "To My Sister;" "Lines Written in

Early Spring;" &c., and the last was that beautiful poem, "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey," written immediately before he left Alfoxden, and just in time to be included in the volume which was then passing through the press, and nearly all printed. For his share of the copyright, Wordsworth received thirty pounds from Cottle; and the volume, a small duodecimo of 210 pages, appeared in the autumn of 1798, when he, his sister, and Coleridge, were on the eve of setting out from London for Germany.

The proximate cause of their leaving Alfoxden would have been ludicrous, if it had not been inconvenient and annoying. The agent (the owner was a minor), an ignorant man with very long ears for the current absurd and silly tittle-tattle of the hinds, on the expiry of the first year, absolutely refused to re-let him the house. This he did, on the presumed ground that Wordsworth was a suspicious character; for the country folks around could not understand, why he, alone, or with others, should spend days roaming over the hills like a partridge, and frequent lonely places on moonlight nights, always "booing about;" or tramp away to the sea, on apparently bootless errands. They, in their wisdom, asked of each other—"Would any man, in his senses, take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water?"

In short, from his never saying a word about politics, he was thought by some to be a Jacobin concocting dark plots, or, if not that, a smuggler interested in the running of wet cargoes, while some were confident that he was "a wise man," by which designation they understood a conjuror! Such ridiculous surmises were rife in the neighbourhood, and actually led to a government spy being sent down to watch his unaccountable proceedings. This individual had a peculiar, long nose; and Coleridge

tells an absurd story of how, as he and Wordsworth lay on the Quantock Hills conversing about Spinoza, the spy, as he skulked behind a bank, overheard their conversation and thought they were speaking about himself under the nickname of "Spy-nosey!" Solely on account of such stupid and unfounded suspicions being credited by the agent, there was no other recourse but to pack up and leave the place.

Wordsworth, to illustrate his own theory, and in direct contradistinction to Coleridge's method in "The Ancient Mariner," wrote "Peter Bell;" but instead of letting it go with the others for the *Lyrical Ballad* volume, he kept it by him in MS. for twenty-one years, retouching it carefully from time to time "to fit it" as he said in dedicating it to Southey, "for filling *permanently* a station, however humble, in the literature of my country." This indeed was his laudable aim in all that he wrote; his most perfect work, as might be expected, is that in which he does not lay too much stress on, or obtrude his special theories —although these in principle were quite right, though sometimes a little overdone in the zeal of his protest against abuses in the opposite direction—but simply lets his verse, like a second nature, *write itself*, in accordance with his own high art-culture, deep reverence, and the clear insight of a good conscience.

In the tale of "Peter Bell," the Potter—not published till 1819,—we have depicted, with a sharp etching needle, the very realistic portrait of a hard indifferent worldly character, quite seared and impervious to every influence of outward nature, or to the access of fine feeling; but the whole current of whose sensual, hateful spirit is at length changed, till he who had been "the wildest of his clan forsook his crimes, repressed his folly" and, at length,

"Became a good and honest man;"

and this change was mainly effected through the influence of remorse.

It has been, somewhere, remarked, that, in this poem, Wordsworth even tries, and with partial success, to change the current of ordinary associations—by making the ass the means of awaking the voice of humanity in the man. The following eight verses present a mental photograph of "Peter Bell," before his transformation; and the last verse speaks suggestively of his awakening:—

"He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell;
They were his dwellings night and day,—
But nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

"In vain, through every changeful year,
Did nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

. . . .

"Though nature could not teach his heart
By lovely forms and silent weather,
And tender sounds, yet you might see
At once, that Peter Bell and she
Had often been together.

"A savage wildness round him hung
As of a dweller out of doors;
In his whole figure and his mien
A savage character was seen,
Of mountains and of dreary moors.

. . . .

"His face was keen as is the wind
That cuts along the hawthorn fence;
Of courage you saw little there,

But, in its stead, a medley air
Of cunning and of impudence.

"He had a dark and sidelong walk,
And long and slouching was his gait;
Beneath his looks so bare and bold,
You might perceive, his spirit cold
Was playing with some inward bait.

"His forehead wrinkled was and furred;
A work one half of which was done
By thinking of his *whens* and *hows;*
And half, by knitting of his brows
Beneath the glaring sun.

"There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye,
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place,
Against the wind and open sky!

. . . . .

"And now is Peter taught to feel
That man's heart is a holy thing;
And Nature, through a world of breath,
Breathes into him a second death,
More searching than the breath of spring."

To this chapter we now append some charming extracts and a few complete poems from "Lyrical Ballads."

"We are Seven" was composed, while Wordsworth was walking in the grove at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798, but the name of the little girl who is the heroine, and whom he had met in the area of Goderich Castle, in 1793, he did not know. Curiously enough, he tells us that he "composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line;" also that he got Coleridge to write the prefatory verse, he, however, striking out the second half of the first line, and putting the first half in its

place. A friend, who saw this poem in the printer's office. urgently implored him to cancel it, as, if published, it would be sure to make him "everlastingly ridiculous;" it is, however, one of his very finest poems, and also one of the most popular:—

## WE ARE SEVEN.

——————A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

"Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be."

Then did the little maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard tree."

"You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit—
I sit and sing to them.

"And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was little Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

"So in the churchyard she was laid;
And when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"

The little maiden did reply,
"O master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away: for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

"The Thorn" was suggested by a tree which he observed standing prominently on a ridge of the Quantock Hills, one stormy day, and which he thus graphically describes:—

"There is a thorn—it looks so old,
In truth, you'd find it hard to say
How it could ever have been young,
It looks so old and gray.
Not higher than a two years' child,
It stands erect, this aged thorn;
No leaves it has, no thorny points;
It is a mass of knotted joints,
A wretched thing forlorn.
It stands erect, and like a stone
With lichens it is overgrown."

And of poor deserted "Martha Ray," that haunts it, he writes—

"At all times of the day and night
This wretched woman thither goes;
And she is known to every star,
And every wind that blows;
And there, beside the thorn, she sits
When the blue daylight's in the skies,
And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And to herself she cries,
'Oh, misery! oh, misery!
Oh, woe is me! oh, misery!"

"Simon Lee:" This old man—whose history Wordsworth gives, mentioning the incident of his one day having helped him to sever the tangled root of an old tree-stump, and his having received his grateful thanks for so doing—had been a huntsman to the squires of Alfoxden. His cottage stood on the common, a little way from the entrance to the Park. "The expression when the hounds were out 'I dearly love their voice,' was, says Wordsworth, word for word from his own lips." Coleridge, in quoting the following lines from this poem, remarks that even in the smaller poems of Wordsworth "there is scarcely one that is not rendered valuable by some just and original reflection."

> "O reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle reader! you would find
> A tale in everything.
>
> . . . . .
>
> The tears into his eyes were brought,
> And thanks and praises seemed to run
> So fast out of his heart, I thought
> They never would have done.
> I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
> With coldness still returning,
> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Hath oftener left me mourning."

The poem "Expostulation and Reply," and its companion poem "The Tables Turned," were both composed about the same time, and in front of the house at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798. They are favourites with Quakers, who regard them as poetical expositions of their views; and William Howitt, when quoting them, says, in reference to the fundamental philosophy of Wordsworth:—"And what, then, is the fundamental philosophy of Wordsworth?"

"It is, what he, perhaps, would himself have started to hear, simply a poetic Quakerism. The Quaker's religious faith is in immediate inspiration. He believes that if he 'centres down,' as he calls it, into his own mind, and puts to rest all his natural faculties and thoughts, he will receive the impulses and intimations of the Divine Spirit. He is not to seek, to strive, to inquire, but to be passive, and receive. This is precisely the great doctrine of Wordsworth, as it regards poetry. He believes the Divine Spirit which fills the universe, to have so moulded all the forms of visible nature, as to make them to us perpetual monitors and instructors:—

> 'To inform
> The mind that is within us; to impress
> With quietness and beauty, and to feed
> With lofty thoughts.'"

William Howitt, also, in the same direction, quotes the following passage, taken from the first book of "The Excursion," in which the poet describes the consecrating effects of early dawn; and of which Robertson of Brighton, when recommending the study of Wordsworth to working men, especially for his unworldliness and elevating power, has truly and admirably said—"There is nothing in these lines except we have the heart to feel them. No man can understand or feel those lines who has led a slothful life, or who has not at one time or other loved to rise early,—no man who, in his early walks, has not mingled with a love of poetry a deep religious sense, who has not felt the consecrating effects of early dawn, or who has not at one time or another, in his early days, in a moment of deep enthusiasm, knelt down amidst the glories of Nature, as the ancient patriarch knelt, canopied only by the sky above him, and feeling that none were awake but the Creator and himself,—bowed down to consecrate and

offer up the whole of his life, experiencing also a strange, and awful, and mysterious feeling, as if a Hand invisible was laid upon his brow, accepting the consecration and the sacrifice:"—

"Such was the boy—but for the growing youth
What soul was his, when, from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love!"

"To My Sister" was written in March, 1798, in front of the house at Alfoxden, where, on a seat, between two great elm-trees, overlooking the park and the sea, he used often to sit when reading or composing. The "larch" alluded to, in the first verse, was a fine well-grown tree, close by and just below the elms. The boy, by whom he sent the lines to his sister, was a son of Basil Montague's who was boarded in the house and under Wordsworth's care. This beautiful poem breathes the very spirit of the early spring-time:—

## TO MY SISTER.

WRITTEN AT A SMALL DISTANCE FROM MY HOUSE, AND SENT BY MY LITTLE BOY.

It is the first mild day of March:
Each minute sweeter than before,
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you; and pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

No joyous forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my friend, will date
The opening of the year.

Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
—It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than fifty years of reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey:

We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be turned to love.

Then come, my sister! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

In the spring of 1799 "A Whirl-blast from Behind the Hill" was both observed, and written about, in the holly-grove at Alfoxden which is the tallest in England:—

"A whirl-blast from behind the hill
Rushed o'er the wood with startling sound;
Then—all at once the air was still,
And showers of hailstones pattered round.
Where leafless oaks towered high above,
I sat within an undergrove
Of tallest hollies, tall and green;
A fairer bower was never seen.
From year to year the spacious floor
With withered leaves is covered o'er,
And all the year the bower is green.
But see! where'er the hailstones drop
The withered leaves all skip and hop;
There's not a breeze—no breath of air—
Yet here, and there, and every where
Along the floor, beneath the shade
By those embowering hollies made,
The leaves in myriads jump and spring,
As if with pipes and music rare
Some Robin Good-fellow were there,
And all those leaves, in festive glee,
Were dancing to the minstrelsy."

"Lines Written in Early Spring" were composed that same season by Wordsworth, while sitting by the side of the brook that runs down the *Comb*, in which is the village of Alford near Alfoxden. They unmistakably express his feelings, in this the germinating spring-time of his genius with regard to the links of sympathy between nature and man, investing even the budding twigs with pleasure, significantly declaring

> "And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes:"—

Such a friendly way of regarding these "lovely children of the earth and sun," as Ben Jonson calls the flowers, is not only poetical but natural and common to pure and thoughtful minds. Our Blessed Lord himself, pointing to the plants before him, said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Little children, simple-minded and unsophisticated, and also the other-worldly, of maturer years, habitually, so look at all God's sentient creatures. It is within our knowledge that, one morning, a gardener, working in the grounds of an English friend, remarked:—"'Tis bad weather ma'am; not pleasant for the flowers; the poor things *can't enjoy themselves*—not a bit!"

## LINES

### WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING.

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link
The human soul that through me ran;

And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

From Heaven if this belief be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

Of "Lines, composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13th, 1798," Wordsworth says:—"No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published, almost immediately after, in the little volume." (*Lyrical Ballads.*)

How touching is the prophetic anticipation of his dear sister's fate, when we recall how sadly those "wild eyes" were darkened in her latter years! Let this remarkable poem be read, in the light of all we have advanced as to Wordsworth's careful, thoughtful, progressive, and loving

reading of Nature, and no one will be led to imagine that he either worshipped, or wished others to worship her as a Pantheist. Be it remembered that he also wrote—"By grace divine, not otherwise, O Nature, we are thine."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### Visit to Germany and Poems written there.

*Lyrical Ballad* Volume Published — Leaves for Hamburg — Goslar — Cold Winter — Wordsworth's Aim and Method alike misunderstood by Jeffrey —Professor Wilson's appreciative Criticism — Love, the Key to Man, and Man, the Key to Nature — Wordsworth's careful Style — Poetry an Art— Self-reliance requisite — Confident as to the Future of his Poems —The Wrong done by False Criticism—At Goslar he reverts to England and the Scenes of his School-days—"Lucy" Poems—"The Sexton"—"Lucy Gray" —Sympathy with a Fly—"Ruth"—"Address to Scholars"—"Matthew" —"The Fountain"—"Two April Mornings"—"Nutting"—"There was a Boy"—Correspondence with Coleridge—Hexameters—Leaves Goslar— Begins the "Prelude."

On being obliged to leave Alfoxden, Wordsworth and his sister resolved to sojourn for a time in Germany, in order to acquire the language and become acquainted with the people. Leaving for London, they reached the metropolis on the 27th of August, 1798, and remained there for between two and three weeks. Within a few days of their arrival in town, *Lyrical Ballads* was published by Cottle at Bristol. Coleridge had also arranged to visit the Continent, and the two friends, with the money obtained for the joint volume in their pockets, and accompanied by Miss Wordsworth, left Yarmouth for Hamburgh, on September 16th.

Having reached that city, they dined and had a pleasant interview with Klopstock, who has been called "a very German Milton." At Hamburg the Words-

worths and Coleridge parted company. Coleridge went alone to Ratzeburg, thirty-four miles north-east of Hamburg, on the road to Lubeck, where he remained for four months, and acquired the German language. Thence he went to Göttingen, where he spent five months, and dived into metaphysics. Wordsworth and his sister, wishing to study German, and also for economical reasons, went to Goslar, in Hanover, an old, imperial, romantic town, where the German emperors of the Franconian line used to keep court. It lay twenty-five miles from Hamburgh in a southern direction, and is situated on the borders of the Hartz Forest, which includes a tract of country where clusters of mountains rise covered with pines, oaks and beeches. They wished to acquire a knowledge of the language and of German society; but Coleridge wrote Wordsworth, from Ratzeburg, that two things were against him, namely—his not liking smoke, and his being accompanied by his sister. He says, "Can Dorothy endure smoke? Here when my friends come to see me the candle nearly goes out, the air is so thick." On account of Miss Wordsworth's being with him, had he accepted invitations he would, in accordance with the customs of the place, have been bound to entertain in return; and his finances did not admit of such expenditure. So they saw but little society. Besides these impediments and disadvantages, the winter of their German sojourn, (1798–9), was one of the bitterest in last century. "So severe," says Wordsworth, "was the cold of this winter, that when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron." Wordsworth's little bedroom was, unfortunately, just over an open unceiled archway, which exposed his apartment to greater chill; and the draper's family, with whom they lodged, used to say that they expected

to find them both frozen to death some of those dreadfully cold mornings. However, neither Wordsworth nor his sister took any harm. Wordsworth felt isolated, and, although he was in Germany among charcoal-burners, his heart was in England, and he dwelt almost entirely on home scenes. Instead of assimilating foreign surroundings and ideas, his mind reverted to Esthwaite and the hills of Westmoreland—the pleasant haunts of his school-days; and he set about writing a number of poems which afterwards appeared in the second series of *Lyrical Ballads.*

Meanwhile, Jeffrey began his attacks on the first volume in a most virulent and abusive strain. Poetry only required to be good and original, in order to attract his ire, and, the better it was, he was the more bitter. He could neither understand Wordsworth's lofty elevation of thought nor his simplicity of style.

Although Wordsworth's celebrated *Preface* did not appear with the first volume, he had in his verses defied the stereotyped ideas previously current as to fitting subjects and language for poetry, and boldly shown a new, and what he considered a better way, by treating of simple natural objects, and choosing his heroes from humble life. His poems were a loud protest against the artificiality long prevalent, exhibiting a yearning love for the freshness and beauty of external Nature, and deep sympathy with the common feelings of mankind. Not only so, but he sought to "impart moral grandeur to poverty, and invest the objects of irrational and inanimate nature with a beauty and grace, of which, it seemed to him, they had long been stripped by a heartless and false taste pretending to the title and delicacy of refinement."

All this was resented by Jeffrey as hateful, and an intolerable innovation. He could see nothing at all of the grandeur and beauty of Wordsworth's lofty aim and high

achievement, although sharp enough to seize upon homely colloquial expressions, and use them as hooks on which to hang rotten criticism, and for turning the whole volume into ridicule. He wrote in a letter, "I have no feeling for the *ideal* poverty of your Wordsworths and Coleridges . . poor, peddling, whining drivellers."

So, in the *Edinburgh Review*, he persistently tried to act the part of the butcher-bird. His condemnatory estimates of many poems which have since, deservedly and permanently, taken their places in the English language, are now only notable for their egregious, blundering blindness.

According to Jeffrey, Wordsworth's verses were "nothing but absurdity;" "never was anything more miserable;" "the 'Ode to the Daisy' was flat, feeble and affected; artificial in diction, and encumbered with heavy expletives." The finest and most elevated passages were—"rant and stuff;" and the immortal "Ode" was—"the most illegible and unintelligible part of his publication!"

We give one more amusing specimen of Jeffrey's worse than worthless verdicts—this time, in regard to Coleridge's "Cristabel:"—"There is," says he, "literally not one couplet in the publication before us, which would be reckoned poetry, or even common sense, were it found in the corner of a newspaper, or upon the window of an inn. . . The thing before us is utterly destitute of value; it exhibits from beginning to end, not a ray of genius."

But this false and absurd adverse criticism, though relentlessly carried on for many long years, could not crush Wordsworth, who calmly followed nature and the bent of his own genius, till the world at length came round to his way of thinking, both in regard to his poetry, and, to his shallow critics. Meanwhile, as an immediate result, there was money loss to Wordsworth and his pub-

lisher, the sale of the volume being very small. Only five hundred copies had been printed, and the greater part of these were sold, as a remainder, by Mr. Cottle, who gave up business soon after its publication. When he transferred his various copyrights to Messrs. Longman & Co. of London, that of the *Ballads* was valued at *nil;* Mr. Cottle therefore begged that it might be returned, and he was thus enabled to make a present of it to the authors.

It is curious and interesting to observe that this volume, on which so little store was then set by a public prejudiced by reviewers to prefer the artificial to the natural, contained Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," and "Nightingale," with Wordsworth's "Lines left upon a Yew-tree Seat," and "Tintern Abbey"—"four poems," says Brimley, "of which it is not too much to say, that since Milton's voice had ceased, such noble strains had not been uttered in English speech."

The general impression, that for long prevailed, was —that Wordsworth was a weak crotchety man who lived somewhere in the Lake district and raved about its scenery; others, in addition, had heard that he wrote a large number of small poems, innocent, puerile, and deservedly laughed at by clever men; and also, some other poems which were dull, heavy and prosy—in fact, that his poetry—to quote the *Edinburgh Review* which mainly produced such impression—was characterized by "babyish incidents, fantastic sensibilities, . . schoolboy imbecilities and vulgar affectations," &c.; and many years passed away before these absurd notions were dissipated and Wordsworth's true greatness came to be universally recognized, by all who had even the least pretence to culture.

Pre-eminent, among those who at the time bravely

stood up for him and did much to stem the shallow roaring tide of adverse criticism, was Professor John Wilson, who, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, month after month, came to his rescue with glowing and eloquent eulogies.

Wordsworth's fresh love of nature, deep feeling, and profound thought, readily enabled him to find moral lessons in common objects around, and always, be it observed, with a view to make men better and happier:—

> "The outward shows of sky and earth,
> Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
> And impulses of deeper birth
> Have come to him in solitude.
>
> In common things that round us lie
> Some random truths he can impart,—
> The harvest of a quiet eye,
> That broods and sleeps on his own heart;"

even, from the lowly daisy, he learns

> "A wisdom fitted to the needs
> Of hearts at leisure."

In short, towards the true appreciation of Wordsworth,

> "You must love him ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love,"

for love is the *only* key which opens the heart of the mystery, whether it lie in nature, or in man.

Wordsworth, in a letter to Sir George Beaumont, wrote: "Let the poet first consult his own heart, as I have done, and leave the rest to posterity,—to, I hope, an improving posterity. . . Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing."

To Sir William Hamilton the Irish astronomer, when dissuading him from writing verses, he wrote: "Again and again I must repeat, that the composition of verse is infinitely more of an *art* than men are prepared to be-

lieve; and absolute success in it depends upon innumerable minutiæ, which it grieves me you should stoop to acquire a knowledge of."

As to his own style, Wordsworth said: "Now, whatever may be the result of my experiment in the subjects which I have chosen for poetical composition—be they vulgar or be they not,—I can say without vanity, that I have bestowed great pains on my *style*, full as much as any of my contemporaries have done on theirs. I yield to none, in *love for my art*. I, therefore, labour at it with reverence, affection and industry. My main endeavour as to style has been that my poems should be written in pure intelligible English."

In a letter to Coleridge, he notes the following inconsistent opinions on his poems, giving them in parallel columns and calling them—

"HARMONIES OF CRITICISM.

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Nutting.' | 'Nutting.' |
| 'Worth its weight in gold.'—*Mr. C. W.* | 'Can make neither head nor tail of it.'—*Mr. S.* |
| 'Joanna.' | 'Joanna.' |
| 'The finest poem of its length you have written.'—*Mr. J. W.* | 'Can make nothing of it.'—*Mr. S.* |
| 'Poet's Epitaph.' | 'Poet's Epitaph.' |
| 'The latter part pre-eminently good, and your own.'—*Mr. Charles Lamb.* | 'The latter part very ill-written.'—*Mr. S.* |
| 'Cumberland Beggar.' | 'Cumberland Beggar.' |
| 'Everybody seems delighted.'—*Mr. J. W.* | 'You seem to presume your readers are stupid: the instructions too direct.'—*Mr. Charles Lamb.* |
| 'Idiot Boy.' | 'Idiot Boy.' |
| A lady, a friend of mine, could talk of nothing else: this, of all the poems, her delight.'—*Mr. J. W.* | 'Almost thrown by it into a fit with disgust; *cannot read it.*'—*Mr. S.* |

But here comes the waggon,

W. W."

Such being a fair specimen of the different verdicts a poet has to encounter, in order that he himself may judge well and choose rightly, Wordsworth says, "These two things, contradictory as they seem, must go together —manly dependence and manly independence, manly reliance and manly self-reliance."

And, so far as readers of poetry are concerned,—they ought not to rest merely with authoritative recommendations, precedents or prescriptions, in determining what poems are good, bad, or indifferent; but, rather, earnestly seek to attain a knowledge of those vital, central principles which will enable them to discriminate and judge intelligently, for themselves, of divergences into new and more direct paths.

Of the future mission of his poems, Wordsworth was always confident and easy-hearted. To a friend, he wrote: "I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will in their degree be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier." Such language was not vanity, or the over-rating of his own opinions, but "the calm confidence of a man who feels the rock under his feet and knows that he is in harmony with the everlasting truth of things. In the issue between the critic and the poet, the world, long neutral, or rather adverse to the latter, at length sided with him, and will continue permanently to do so."

As to how, in later years, Wordsworth regarded this heartless abuse to which he was so long subjected by shallow critics; the late Lady Richardson communicated to Dr. Grosart the following very interesting personal memorandum:—"*August 28th* 1841.—Mr. Wordsworth,

Miss Fenwick, and Mrs. Hill came to dine, and it rained on the whole day, but happily the poet talked on from two to eight without being weary, as we certainly were not. After dinner, when we came to the drawing-room, the conversation turned on the treatment of Wordsworth by the reviews of the day. I had never heard him open out on it before, and was much struck with the manner in which he did it; from his present elevation looking calmly back on the past, and at the same time feeling that an irreparable injury had been done to him, at the time when life and hope were young. As nearly as I can, I shall record his words as they were spoken. He said:—

"'At the time I resolved to dedicate myself to poetry and separate myself from the ordinary lucrative professions, it would certainly have been a great object to me to have reaped the profits I should have done from my writings, but for the stupidity of Mr. Gifford and the impertinence of Mr. Jeffrey. It would have enabled me to purchase many books which I could not obtain, and I should have gone to Italy earlier, which I never could afford to do until I was sixty-five, when Moxon gave me a thousand pounds for my writings. This was the only kind of injury Mr. Jeffrey did me, for I immediately perceived that his mind was of that kind that his individual opinion on poetry was of no consequence to me whatever, that it was only by the influence his periodical exercised at the time in preventing my poems being read and sold that he could injure me; for feeling that my writings were founded on what was true and spiritual in human nature, I knew the time would come when they must be known, and I never therefore felt his opinion of the slightest value, except in preventing the young of that generation from receiving impressions which might have

been of use to them through life. I say this, I hope, not in a boasting spirit, but I am now daily surprised by receiving letters from various places at home and abroad expressive of gratitude to me from persons I never saw or heard of. As this occurs now, I may fairly conclude that it might have been so when the poems appeared, but for the tyranny exercised over public opinion by the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews.*'"[1]

At Goslar, Wordsworth wrote many poems;—such as, the several exquisite stanzas on "Lucy," "The Poet's Epitaph," "Lines to a Sexton," "The Danish Boy," "Lucy Gray," "Lines written in Germany," "Ruth," "Address to the Scholars of a Village School," "The Two April Mornings," "The Fountain, a Conversation," "Matthew," "Nutting," "The Influence of Natural Objects," "There was a boy, ye knew him well," &c.

Not being in a position to mingle with German society, his thoughts, as we have seen, fondly recurred to his native land, and to the pleasant scenes of school days.

The scenery of the river Dove was indelibly associated in his mind with a former object of Wordsworth's affections, who died at an early age, and whom he has celebrated, under the name of Lucy, in some of the sweetest verses which the poet ever wrote. The following five poems relate to her:—[2]

I.

"I travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore

[1] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart, vol. iii. p. 437.

[2] These are so numbered by A. J. S.

A second time; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed,
The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine is too the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed."

II.

"Strange fits of passion I have known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the lover's ear alone,
What once to me befel.

When she I loved was strong and gay,
And like a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath the evening moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
My horse trudged on—and we drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And as we climbed the hill,
Towards the roof of Lucy's cot
The moon descended still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped;

When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a lover's head!—
'Oh, mercy!' to myself I cried,
'If Lucy should be dead!'"

III.

"Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then nature said, 'A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

'Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

'She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

'The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend:
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

'The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,

And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.[1]

'And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell.'

Thus nature spake—the work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be."

This poem was a great favourite with Charles Lamb, and Brimley says that it contains "the most exquisite description ever written of an English country girl, half child, half woman, with the wildness and witchery of a sylphide, the grace of a duchess, and the purity of an angel."

IV.

"A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks and stones and trees."

Of these remarkable verses Aubrey De Vere says:—"His heart, as well as his imagination, was ardent. When it spoke most powerfully in his poetry, it spoke with a

[1] This stanza and the two preceding are dwelt upon with much admiration by Sara Coleridge in her notes to the *Biographia Literaria*. She calls the poem "exquisitely Wordsworthian."

stern brevity unusual in that poetry, as in the poem. . . 'A slumber did my spirit seal,' a poem impassioned beyond the comprehension of those who fancy that Wordsworth lacks passion, merely because in him passion is neither declamatory nor, latently, sensual."

V.

"She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!"

What rare concentration of simplicity and pathos! We have here the tragedy of a heart told in a few touches by the hand of a master—a psychological gem of the first water; and Brimley speaks of it as "tender and graceful, sad, holy, and beautiful as a Madonna!"

In the touching lines "To a Sexton," a widower is described as requesting that functionary not to remove a finger-joint, or in any way disturb the consecrated spot where a whole fireside lies each to the other dear, like roses, lilies, and violets, arranged side by side in a garden, because he too wishes to be laid there, beside his wife Jane; adding—

"Let one grave hold the loved and lover."

Speaking of this poem, Charles Lamb said "Simon's sickly daughter in 'The Sexton' made me cry."

## TO A SEXTON.

Let thy wheelbarrow alone—
Wherefore, sexton, piling still
In thy bone-house bone on bone?
'Tis already like a hill
In a field of battle made,
Where three thousand skulls are laid;
These died in peace each with the other,
Father, sister, friend, and brother.

Mark the spot to which I point!
From this platform, eight feet square,
Take not even a finger joint:
Andrew's whole fire-side is there.
Here, alone, before thine eyes,
Simon's sickly daughter lies,
From weakness now, and pain defended,
Whom he twenty winters tended.

Look but at the gardener's pride—
How he glories, when he sees
Roses, lilies, side by side,
Violets in families!
By the heart of man, his tears,
By his hopes and by his fears,
Thou, old grey-beard! art the warden
Of a far superior garden.

Thus then, each to other dear,
Let them all in quiet lie,
Andrew there, and Susan here,
Neighbours in mortality.
And, should I live through sun and rain
Seven widowed years without my Jane,
O sexton, do not then remove her,
Let one grave hold the loved and lover.

The first nine verses of "A Poet's Epitaph" contain

caustic sketches of character, and the last six much that is exquisitely beautiful in thought and expression.

"Lucy Gray" was founded on a circumstance, told him by his sister, of a little girl, not far from Halifax, in Yorkshire, who was bewildered and lost in a snowstorm. Wordsworth beautifully spiritualizes the incident, and the memory of her lives on, in the reader's heart:—

### LUCY GRAY; OR, SOLITUDE.

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor—
The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

"To-night will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go;
And take a lantern, child, to light
Your mother through the snow."

"That, father, will I gladly do:
'Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!"

At this the father raised his hook,
And snapped a faggot band;
He plied his work:—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe:
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time:
She wandered up and down;
And many a hill did Lucy climb;
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.

They wept, and turning homeward, cried,
"In heaven we all shall meet:"
When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downward from the steep hill's edge
They track the footmarks small;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone-wall;

And then an open field they crossed:
The marks were still the same;
They tracked them on, nor ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank;
And further there were none!

—Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;

That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

In lines "Written in Germany on one of the coldest days of the Century," his ready sympathies are called forth in behalf of a poor disconsolate benumbed fly which creeps slowly to the edge of his stove for warmth:—

"His eyesight and hearing are lost;
Between life and death his blood freezes and thaws;
And his two pretty pinions of blue dusky gauze
Are glued to his sides by the frost."

The poet pities its utter loneliness, as compared with his own larger resources and compensational power of up-conjuring pleasant scenes,

"As blest and as glad, in this desolate gloom,
As if green summer grass were the floor of my room
And woodbines were hanging above,"

and he humanely wishes that in any way he could sustain the enfeebled insect's life,

"Till summer come up from the south, and with crowds
Of thy brethren, a march thou should'st sound through the clouds,
And back to the forest again!"

This outgoing of fellow-feeling towards a little fly is characteristically typical of Wordsworth's mind, and illustrates his wide sympathies, and his kindly nature.

The poem "Ruth," also written at Goslar, was suggested to him by facts once related to him by a wanderer in Somersetshire. The youth from Georgia's shore, por-

trayed in it, is a lifelike mental portrait of great psychological interest; for the transient gusts of good impulses which mingle with those of another kind, like summer breezes fill the sails, but are rendered entirely nugatory by the vessel's having no rudder to steer it—so that instead of navigation we have wayward drifting and consequent shipwreck; while the fate of poor Ruth is touchingly sad:—

. . . . . .

"The youth of green savannas spake,
And many an endless, endless lake,
With all its fairy crowds
Of islands, that together lie
As quietly as spots of sky
Among the evening clouds.

. . . . . .

'Sweet Ruth! and could you go with me
My helpmate in the woods to be,
Our shed at night to rear;
Or run, my own adopted bride,
A sylvan huntress at my side,
And drive the flying deer!

. . . . . .

'And now, as fitting is and right,
We in the church our faith will plight,
A husband and a wife.'
Even so they did; and I may say
That to sweet Ruth that happy day
Was more than human life.

. . . . . .

Full soon that purer mind was gone;
No hope, no wish remained, not one,—
They stirred him now no more;
New objects did new pleasure give,
And once again he wished to live
As lawless as before.

"Meanwhile, as thus with him it fared,
They for the voyage were prepared,
And went to the sea-shore;
But when they thither came, the youth
Deserted his poor bride, and Ruth
Could never find him more."

. . . . . .

In the "Address to the Scholars of a Village School," which is a touching melody, he reverts to the tablet at Hawkshead, on which are inscribed in gilt letters the names of those who have been schoolmasters there; and in this poem he would seem to refer more or less to the death-bed farewell of his own master—Taylor. Though half a century had elapsed since the presence of that good old man, as the breeze played with the locks of his white hair, had blessed his native vale, Wordsworth, looking back, thus lovingly addresses him:—

"Oh true of heart, of spirit gay,
Thy faults, where not already gone
From memory, prolong their stay
For charity's sweet sake alone."

The poems addressed "To Matthew" with his constitutional joyousness, (for

"The tears which come to Matthew's eyes
Were tears of light, the dew of gladness,")

relate to the same person, who, like men of his peculiar temperament, also feels silent sorrow all the more acutely, in the correspondingly profound depths of a thoughtful spirit: Wordsworth concludes by exclaiming

"Thou soul of God's best earthly mould!
Thou happy soul! and can it be
That these two words of glittering gold
Are all that must remain of thee?"

"The Fountain, a Conversation," written at Goslar, belongs to the same series and is a beautiful poem:

## THE FOUNTAIN.

### A CONVERSATION.

We talked with open heart, and tongue
Affectionate and true,
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two.

We lay beneath a spreading oak,
Beside a mossy seat;
And from the turf a fountain broke,
And gurgled at our feet.

"Now Matthew!" said I, "let us match
This water's pleasant tune
With some old Border song, or catch
That suits a summer's noon;

"Or of the church clock and the chimes
Sing here beneath the shade,
That half-mad thing of witty rhymes
Which you last April made!"

In silence Matthew lay, and eyed
The spring beneath the tree;
And thus the dear old man replied,
The gray-haired man of glee:

"Down to the vale this water steers,
How merrily it goes!
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.

"And here, on this delightful day,
I cannot choose but think
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay
Beside this fountain's brink.

"My eyes are dim with childish tears.
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.

"Thus fares it still in our decay:
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.

"The blackbird in the summer trees,
The lark upon the hill,
Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will.

"With nature never do *they* wage
A foolish strife; they see
A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free:

"But we are pressed by heavy laws;
And often, glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

"If there is one who need bemoan
His kindred laid in earth,
The household hearts that were his own:
It is the man of mirth.

"My days, my friend, are almost gone,
My life has been approved,
And many love me; but by none
Am I enough beloved."[1]

"Now both himself and me he wrongs,
The man who thus complains!
I live and sing my idle songs
Upon these happy plains;

[1] Coleridge bestows especial praise on the six beautiful quadrains of which this is the last.—A. J. S.

"And Matthew, for thy children dead
I'll be a son to thee!"
At this he grasped my hand, and said,
"Alas! that cannot be."

We rose up from the fountain-side;
And down the smooth descent
Of the green sheep-track did we glide;
And through the wood we went;

And, ere we came to Leonard's rock,
He sang those witty rhymes
About the crazy old church-clock,
And the bewildered chimes.

In the "Two April Mornings," is a very touching picture of Matthew's resignation to God's will. A beautiful April day reminds him of such another, just thirty years before, when he was out with his fishing-rod; and, on coming to the church, he stops short beside the grave of his daughter, whom he thus describes:—

"Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
The pride of all the vale;
And then she sang;—she would have been
A very nightingale.

"Six feet in earth my Emma lay;
And yet I loved her more,
For so it seemed, than till that day
I e'er had loved before.

"And turning from her grave, I met,
Beside the churchyard yew,
A blooming girl, whose hair was wet
With points of morning dew.

"A basket on her head she bare;
Her brow was smooth and white:
To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight!

"No fountain from its rocky cave
E'er tripped with foot so free;
She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea.

"There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I looked at her, and looked again:
And did not wish her mine!"

Wordsworth closes the poem by saying—

"Matthew is in his grave, yet now,
Methinks, I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand."

In "Nutting"—which was originally intended to form part of his autobiographical poem, the "Prelude"—he reverts to the days of his boyhood when, rambling in the coppices and extensive woods that stretch from the side of Esthwaite Lake towards Graythwaite, suitably equipped for the expedition by the frugal ancient dame with whom he lodged, and his natural toying with the delight of coming on the tempting clusters. How exquisitely he describes that sequestered flowery nook, with fairy water-breaks murmuring on with sparkling foam by great boulder-stones fleeced with moss, beneath the shady trees, where

"The violets of five summers re-appear
And fade, unseen by any human eye!"

And how finely he expresses his feeling of the deep sacredness of the life that there is in Nature—a feeling which was also set forth by the Ancients, who represented a shepherd or huntsman, when passing through a wood, plucking up some herb or cutting down some branch, and startled by seeing drops of human blood issue from it, or

by hearing a human voice proclaim that he had injured some imprisoned human-life in that tree. Witness the sense of pain and remorse with which Wordsworth viewed the merciless ravage and desolation he had caused, in dragging down branch and bow and mutilating the bower, so that the hazels, deformed and sullied, patiently gave up their quiet being to the rash intruder on the virgin scene,—exhorting his sister and companion henceforth to touch with gentle hand, "for there is a spirit in the woods!"

Brimley says of this poem that it is "well worthy of being considered a pendent to 'Tintern Abbey.'"

## NUTTING.

It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days which cannot die;
When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
I left our cottage-threshold, sallying forth
With a huge wallet o'er my shoulder slung,
A nutting-crook in hand; and turned my steps
Towards the distant woods, a figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
Which for that service had been husbanded,
By exhortation of my frugal dame—
Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles—and, in truth,
More raggèd than need was! Among the woods,
And o'er the pathless rocks, I forced my way,
Until, at length, I came to one dear nook
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation; but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,
A virgin scene!—A little while I stood,

Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet;—or beneath the trees I sate
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
A temper known to those, who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blest
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
The violets of five seasons re-appear
And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
For ever; and I saw the sparkling foam,
And—with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, beneath the shady trees,
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep—
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bow, with crash
And merciless ravage; and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being: and, unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Even then, when from the bower I turned away
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees and the intruding sky.—
Then, dearest maiden! move along these shades
In gentleness of heart: with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

The fine poem on the "Influence of Natural Objects" in calling forth his imagination, beginning "Wisdom

and Spirit of the Universe," was also written at this time. It, and the poem—

> "There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye cliffs
> And islands of Winander,"

were both afterwards embodied in the "Prelude." He sent them in MS. to Coleridge, then at Ratzeburg, who thought them very beautiful, and, of the lines—

> "The visible scene
> Would enter unawares into his mind
> With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
> Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
> Into the bosom of the steady lake,"

occurring in the latter poem, he wrote:—"I should have recognized them anywhere; and, had I met these lines running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out—'Wordsworth!'"

In the correspondence of the two poets, Coleridge expressed "unbounded admiration and affection" for his friend; and, after planning for their living near each other in the future, he writes:—"I am sure I need not say how you are incorporated into the better part of my being; how, whenever I spring forward into the future with noble affections, I always alight by your side." And, when writing about and giving examples of hexameters, he thus takes occasion to express his feelings, after calling Wordsworth his "teacher and friend:"—

> "William my head and my heart! dear poet that feelest and thinkest!
> Dorothy, eager of soul, my most affectionate sister!
> Many a mile, O! many a wearisome mile are ye distant,
> Long, long, comfortless roads, with no one eye that doth know us."
>
> . . . . . .

"William, my head and my heart! dear William and dear
Dorothea!
You have all in each other; but I am lonely, and want you!"

It was on leaving Goslar, that Wordsworth, on the 10th of February 1799, wrote the opening passage of the "Prelude," joyfully welcoming the breeze and the country, when leaving the city walls.

The "Prelude" is a mental autobiography—recording, in blank verse, the growth of his mind and his personal history—his travels, hopes, aspirations, disappointments and distresses—his inward conflicts and perplexities. He had learned, by a residence abroad, though pleasant enough in its way, more highly to value the blessings of England, whither he and his sister now returned.

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## CHAPTER VII.

RETURNS TO ENGLAND AND SETTLES AT TOWNEND, GRASMERE. THE PRELUDE. PRODUCTIVE PERIOD. SECOND VOLUME OF LYRICAL BALLADS. LONSDALE-DEBT PAID. HIS HAPPY MARRIAGE.

Visits the Hutchinsons — Takes Cottage at Grasmere — His Dalesmen or "Statesmen" Neighbours— "Hart-leap Well" —Captain Wordsworth— "Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm"—"The Prelude"—Second Edition of "Lyrical Ballads," with Preface—"The Pet-Lamb"—"The Idle Shepherd Boys"—"The Brothers"—"Michael"—Wordsworth States his Aim in writing the last two Poems—"Poems on the Naming of Places"—"To M. H."—"Joanna's Rock"—"To a Butterfly"—"The Reverie of Poor Susan"—"The Beggars"—Miss Wordsworth—Their Friends—Charles Lamb—Lonsdale-Debt Paid—Visits France—Marriage—Cottage-home at Townend, Grasmere—Mrs. Wordsworth—Poems relating to her—"She was a Phantom of Delight."

In the spring of 1799, when Wordsworth returned to England, he was in his thirtieth year. He and his sister went to visit their relatives the Hutchinsons at Sockburn-

on-Tees, and remained there till the autumn, making occasional excursions into the surrounding country.

On one of these expeditions, in the month of September, he was accompanied by his sailor-brother John, and by Coleridge, through Cumberland and Westmoreland. It was Coleridge's first visit to the Lake district, and all of them were specially enchanted with the lovely vale of Grasmere. It was on this excursion that Wordsworth first saw the vacant, two-storied cottage, situated at the extremity of Grasmere, which part of the village is called Townend; and on which, he and his sister, soon after fixed, as their home. It had previously been a public house, with the sign of "The Dove and the Olive Bough." It stands by the side of the coach road from Ambleside to Keswick, as it enters Grasmere, and facing the lake; while, behind, is a plot of orchard and garden ground, shelving up to the wooded mountains above it.

Thither, Wordsworth and his sister walked over the bleak fells, from Sockburn-on-Tees, in December when the ground was hard as iron, the waterfalls frozen, and snow-drift on the hills. They lodged at night in cottages, or in little wayside inns; where, sitting by the kitchen fire, Wordsworth would give shape to thoughts that had occurred to him during the day. Only once did they, on the way, get a lift from an empty cart. On December 21st, they reached this humble cottage which was their first settled home, and in which they continued to reside till the spring of 1808.

Henceforth, poetry was to be the business of his life, and he settled down to earnest work, which he peacefully and happily continued to prosecute for the next fifty years, either here, or at Allan Bank, or Rydal Mount, his successive residences, all of which were in the same delightful neighbourhood.

During this Townend period, his best poems were written. Thirty years before, the poet Gray had visited Grasmere, and was greatly struck with the strange broken outlines of Helm Crag, rising above one of the sweetest landscapes, like some gigantic building demolished, and the stones, of which it had been composed, flung in wild confusion across it. "Not a single red tile," says Gray, "no flaring gentleman's house, or garden walls, break in upon the repose of this little unsuspected paradise; but all is peace, rusticity, and happy poverty in its neatest and most becoming attire." Such was the fair scene where Wordsworth now fixed his abode.

The joint income of the poet and his sister was, at this time, barely one hundred pounds a year; but by prudent economy and self-denial they were able to live; thus affording a striking practical example, in their cottage home, of "plain living and high thinking."

Speaking of another, Wordsworth, in a letter to Sir George Beaumont, used words which might aptly be applied to himself—

"It is," said he, "an animating sight to see a man of genius, regardless of temporary gains, whether of money or praise, fixing his attention solely upon what is interesting and permanent, and finding his happiness in an entire devotion of himself to such pursuits as shall most ennoble human nature. We have not yet seen enough of this in modern times."

Wordsworth and his sister associated, on terms of equal and kindly hospitality, with the occupants of the neighbouring farms—the dalesmen or "statesmen"—independent and honest peasant-lairds, whose ancestors had for generations lived and died in the same crofts. "He would receive them to tea in his house, or would go to sup in theirs. If invited to a distant vale, the ladies

would travel in a cart, the poet walking by its side." Their manners were simple, manly, and severe; and the fleeces of the sheep were spun by their wives and daughters. Sterling worth and pure domestic virtues were sheltered under these roofs. Machinery put out the spinning-wheels, and the lands passed into other hands.

One poem, the greater part of which Wordsworth composed when he and his sister were journeying, from Sockburn on the banks of the Tees, to Grasmere, was "Hart-leap Well." A peasant, whom they met near the spot, told the story and pointed out the stones. Hart-leap Well is a small spring of water, about five miles from Richmond, in Yorkshire. Its name is derived from a remarkable chase, the memory of which is preserved by three stone pillars, placed in a line, to indicate—

> "Three several hoof-marks which the hunted beast
> Had left imprinted on the grassy ground,"

in bounding from the mountain's brow, down to the well where it died—leaps, the like of which had never been seen, before or since. A stone basin was formed for the spring, and a bower was raised on the spot; but the desperate race and cruel leap of the poor hart, which had been hunted for thirteen hours, brought a curse on the spot. Where the great palace-lodge itself stood is long forgotten; lifeless stumps of aspen wood now represent the bower; and no animal will wet his lips within that cup of stone:—

> "Gray-headed shepherd, thou hast spoken well;
> Small difference lies between thy creed and mine:
> This beast not unobserved by nature fell;
> His death was mourned by sympathy divine.
>
> "The being that is in the clouds and air,
> That is in the green leaves among the groves,

Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom He loves.

. . . . . .

"One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals,
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

The winter of 1799-1800 was one long storm; the roads were blocked with snow for months, and Wordsworth and his sister were kept much indoors. Spring set them free, and brought back to their home their sailor brother John, who was the Captain of an East India-man. He was two years and eight months younger than William, thoroughly appreciative, discriminating, refined, and of congenial tastes. He spent eight months with them at this time, while waiting for the command of the ship to which he was appointed, and just before quitting them on his last disastrous voyage.

When his brother's poems were being totally neglected by the public, and treated with scorn by most of the reviewers who deigned to take any notice of them, the Captain confidently and truly predicted their ultimate success; remarking that "most of William's poetry improves upon the second, third, or fourth reading." "My brother's poetry," said he, "has a great deal to struggle against; but I hope it will overcome all: it is certainly *founded upon Nature, and that is the best foundation.* . . The poems *will become* popular *in time*, but it will be *by degrees.* The fact is, there are not a great many persons that will be pleased with them at first, but those that are pleased with them will be pleased *in a high degree*, and they will *be people of sense:* and this will have weight, and *then* people who neither understand, nor wish to understand, them, will praise them."

At a later period, after Captain Wordsworth's lamentable death in February, 1805, by shipwreck on the shores of England through the fault of a pilot, the poet thus writes of him to Sir George Beaumont:—

"As you will have seen, we had little to live upon, and he as little (Lord Lonsdale being then alive). But he encouraged me to persist, and to keep my eye steady on its object. He would work for me (that was his language), for me and his sister; and I was to endeavour to do something for the world. He went to sea, as commander, with this hope; his voyage was very unsuccessful, he having lost by it considerably. When he came home, we chanced to be in London, and saw him. 'Oh!' said he, 'I have thought of you and nothing but you; if ever of myself, and my bad success, it was only on your account.' He went again to sea, a second time, and also was unsuccessful; still with the same hopes on our account, though then not so necessary, Lord Lowther having paid the money. Lastly came the lamentable voyage, which he entered upon, full of expectation, and love to his sister and myself, and my wife, whom, indeed, he loved with all a brother's tenderness. This is the end of his part of the agreement—of his efforts for my welfare! God grant me life and strength to fulfil mine! I shall never forget him,—never lose sight of him. there is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living, nay, far more sacred, calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost to live in honour and worthiness."

There are touching allusions to Captain Wordsworth, in "The Brothers," in the "Character of the Happy Warrior," in "Elegiac Verses to the Daisy," and in "Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont," all testifying to his refined taste, true nobility of character, and also to the warm affection with which he was regarded.

In the last-named poem, Wordsworth thus speaks of

the changed feelings with which he now beholds the sea, even in calm, since that great loss befell him:—

"Ah! then, if mine had been the painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The Consecration, and the Poet's dream; . .
So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanised my soul.
Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene. . .
But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn."

Wordsworth was subject to inflammation of the eyes, and, consequently, was unable to read much at a time. The English poets, ancient history, and modern books of travel were his favourite reading. He told a friend that he had not spent five shillings on new books in as many years, and that of the few old ones, of which his library chiefly consisted, he had not read a fifth. His study was in the open air, and, wandering by the side of the running brooks, which he loved—

"Far better than the sages' books;"

or in the tall fir-wood, on the hill-side above the old road leading from Grasmere to Rydal, where, while composing verses, he might often be heard murmuring them aloud.

He had begun the "Prelude" in Germany, on leaving Goslar; and from time to time he continued adding to it, so that six out of the fourteen books of which it is com-

posed were written before 1805. It is an autobiography in verse, showing the growth and development of his mind in relation to nature and man. The record of his early years, and the influence of nature on his mind, at that period, somewhat resemble the experience of Beattie, as recorded in "The Minstrel." "The Prelude" has been called, "A real anthem of a beautiful and holy life. In a greater or less degree, it is a reflex also of the universal experience of man—certainly that of all earnest and thoughtful men." We have the scenes and feelings of his self-sufficing and independent boyhood, the foundations of his poetic life, and the maturing of his meditative mind, from childhood to manhood, with his different progressive modes of viewing Nature in its relation to Man; until, to him, at length—in every form, colour, or sound—it spake rememberable things.

In the First Book, we find these beautiful and far-reaching lines:—

> "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
> Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
> That givest to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion, not in vain
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood did'st thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human soul;
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things—
> With life and nature—purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognize
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart."

In the autumn of 1800, when a second edition of the first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* was being reprinted, Wordsworth added to it a new volume, which contained

thirty-seven additional poems. For these two volumes, only £100 was offered by Longmans. Coleridge's poems were left out, and this edition contained many of the poems written in Germany, and some others suggested since his return home, besides the famous Preface on the principles of poetry.

Coleridge had paid a visit to the cottage at Grasmere, at the end of August. A month later, on the 29th of September, Captain Wordsworth had left it; and, on the following day, September 30th, Wordsworth wrote the preface and notes to this his new edition. This preface showed his belief that he was right, and his firm determination to persevere in spite of the critics. By them, it was wrathfully regarded as a puny and presumptuous gauntlet of defiance; but the smooth pebble from the brook, and the simple sling in the hands of David, soon laid the Philistine low, and his superior might was acknowledged. On the other hand, of the Preface, Charles Lamb sympathetically wrote to Wordsworth:—"I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see."

Two years later, another edition of both series of the *Lyrical Ballads* was issued, for which Wordsworth received another payment of £100.

We shall now glance at some of the poems belonging to this period.

Every one knows "The Pet Lamb"—a sweet pastoral poem which few will object to read again:—

### THE PET-LAMB: A PASTORAL.

The dew was falling fast, the stars began to blink;
I heard a voice; it said, "Drink, pretty creature, drink!"
And, looking o'er the hedge, before me I espied
A snow-white mountain lamb with a maiden at its side.

No other sheep was near, the lamb was all alone,
And by a slender cord was tethered to a stone;
With one knee on the grass did the little maiden kneel,
While to that mountain lamb she gave its evening meal.

The lamb, while from her hand he thus his supper took,
Seemed to feast with head and ears; and his tail with pleasure
shook.
"Drink, pretty creature, drink," she said in such a tone
That I almost received her heart into my own.

'Twas little Barbara Lewthwaite, a child of beauty rare!
I watched them with delight, they were a lovely pair.
Now with her empty can the maiden turned away;
But ere ten yards were gone her footsteps did she stay.

Towards the lamb she looked; and from that shady place
I unobserved could see the workings of her face:
If nature to her tongue could measured numbers bring,
Thus, thought I, to her lamb that little maid might sing:

"What ails thee, young one? what? Why pull so at thy cord?
Is it not well with thee? well both for bed and board?
Thy plot of grass is soft, and green as grass can be;
Rest, little young one, rest; what is't that aileth thee?

"What is it thou would'st seek? What is wanting to thy
heart?
Thy limbs, are they not strong? And beautiful thou art:
This grass is tender grass; these flowers they have no peers;
And that green corn all day is rustling in thy ears!

"If the sun be shining hot, do but stretch thy woollen chain,
This beech is standing by, its covert thou canst gain;
For rain and mountain storms! the like thou need'st not fear,
The rain and storms are things that scarcely can come here.

"Rest, little young one, rest; thou hast forgot the day
When my father found thee first in places far away;
Many flocks were on the hills, but thou wert owned by none,
And thy mother from thy side for evermore was gone.

"He took thee in his arms, and in pity brought thee home:
A blessed day for thee! then whither wouldst thou roam?
A faithful nurse thou hast; the dam that did thee yean
Upon the mountain tops no kinder could have been.

"Thou know'st that twice a day I have brought thee in this can
Fresh water from the brook, as clear as ever ran;
And twice in the day, when the ground is wet with dew,
I bring thee draughts of milk, warm milk it is and new.

"Thy limbs will shortly be twice as stout as they are now,
Then I'll yoke thee to my cart like a pony in the plough;
My playmate thou shalt be; and when the wind is cold
Our hearth shall be thy bed, our house shall be thy fold.

"It will not, will not rest!—poor creature, can it be
That 'tis thy mother's heart which is working so in thee?
Things that I know not of belike to thee are dear,
And dreams of things which thou canst neither see nor hear.

"Alas, the mountain tops that look so green and fair!
I've heard of fearful winds and darkness that come there;
The little brooks that seem all pastime and all play,
When they are angry, roar like lions for their prey.

"Here thou need'st not dread the raven in the sky;
Night and day thou art safe,—our cottage is hard by.
Why bleat so after me? Why pull so at thy chain?
Sleep—and at break of day I will come to thee again!"

—As homeward through the lane I went with lazy feet,
This song to myself did I oftentimes repeat;
And it seemed, as I retraced the ballad line by line,
That but half of it was hers, and one half of it was *mine*.

Again, and once again, did I repeat the song;
"Nay," said I, "more than half to the damsel must belong,
For she looked with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,
That I almost received her heart into my own."

Wordsworth tells us that the beautiful child, Barbara

Lewthwaite, named in the poem, although naturally appropriating and proud of the honour, in reality was not the girl he had actually seen and overheard speaking to the lamb; he does not, however, give us her real name; but, whoever she was, she lives immortalized in song, and many, in coming generations, will continue to repeat the closing lines

"For she looked with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,
That I almost received her heart into my own."

"The Idle Shepherd Boys; or Dungeon Ghyll Force" relates, how the poet himself rescued a helpless lamb from a troubled pool of water, encompassed round by huge rocks, into which it had been carried down by a waterfall; and where, still swimming round and round, it answered its mother's plaintive, forlorn cry from the lofty rocks above. He drew it from the pool, and carried it, till the careless shepherd boys unexpectedly met him with his charge, when:—

"Into their arms the lamb they took,
Said they, 'He's neither maimed nor scarred.'
Then up the steep ascent they hied,
And placed him at his mother's side;
And gently did the bard
Those idle shepherd boys upbraid,
And bade them better mind their trade."

"The Brothers" was composed in a grove at the north-east end of Grasmere Lake. There are two shepherd lads in the dale; one brother remains at home, and the other, at the age of sixteen, goes to sea, to push his fortune with a view to aid the other. After twenty years he returns as a stranger, and, unrecognized, in talking with the vicar, finds that his brother lies in the churchyard; he had

fallen asleep upon the top of a rock called "the pillar," and on waking had accidentally fallen over, his staff being caught midway on the rocky precipice, where it hung for a year. Stunned by the sad tidings, he who had returned at once relinquishes his long-cherished plan of settling at home, writes a letter to the vicar, telling him what he could not trust himself to say, again betakes himself to sea, and becomes a grey-haired mariner.

The story was told to Wordsworth at Ennerdale, and is strikingly rendered. Lamb speaks of "that fine Shaksperian character of 'the happy man' in 'The Brothers,' that creeps—

> 'about the fields
> Following his fancies by the hour, to bring
> Tears down his cheek, or solitary smiles,
> Into his face, until the setting sun
> Write fool upon his forehead.'"

Such was the vicar's mistaken idea, as to what the stranger sailor-brother's perpetual holiday feelings might be, when he first saw him approaching, in the path which led from his cottage to the churchyard, that July evening.

About this time Wordsworth wrote "Michael," which gives a striking and forcible picture of the life of a shepherd among the dalesmen—virtuous, independent, and of Scandinavian origin—powerfully told; an idyllic poem of the mountains, the blank verse of which is direct and nobly plain, while the story treats mainly of the inner life.

The character and circumstances of "Luke," in it, were taken from a family that had once, many years before, owned the house at Townend in which Wordsworth now lived, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere.

Michael, an aged dalesman, shrewd, industrious, and cheerful, spent his whole life, from boyhood to old age,

in a daily conflict with the elements; his frugal wife Isabel—comely, prudent, and ever busy with her spinning-wheels—was twenty years younger than himself. A son was born to them in their old age, and Michael doating on him trained him from childhood to tend the flocks. But, when the lad, Luke, had reached his eighteenth year, evil tidings came that the half of all the old man's savings were swept away to discharge the forfeiture of a suretiship. To save the land from passing out of the family, the parents consented that Luke should be sent away to a kinsman. The old man, from day to day, kept building at a sheepfold, up Green Head Ghyll. His son, alas! took to evil courses, and had to hide himself beyond the seas. Michael bore the trial, and kept building on at the sheepfold for seven years, and, when he died, it was still unfinished. Isabel survived her husband for three years, and, at her death, the estate was sold. The site has been ploughed, and great changes have been wrought; yet the oak that grew beside their door is left, and the remains of the unfinished sheepfold may still be seen, beside the brook of Green Head Ghyll.

These poems—"The Brothers," and "Michael"—simple transcripts from nature noble and touching, were written, as Wordsworth has recorded in his letter to Fox, "with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply." "I have," says he, "attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent *proprietors* of land, here called statesmen, men of respectable education, who daily labour on their own little properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are

proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power, which these affections will acquire among such men, is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet on which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man, from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing."[1]

The series of "Poems on the Naming of Places" was written to record various little incidents in connection with some of his friends. Among these, that beginning "There is an eminence," refers to Stone Arthur which rises above the road by the side of Grasmere Lake, towards Keswick. In it, he pays the following beautiful tribute to his sister:—

> "And she who dwells with me, whom I have loved
> With such communion, that no place on earth
> Can ever be a solitude to me,
> Hath to this lonely summit given my name."

The sweet lines "To M. H." were addressed to Mary Hutchinson, two years before she became his wife. The pool to which he alludes is in Rydal Upper Park.

TO M. H.

> Our walk was far among the ancient trees:
> There was no road, nor any woodman's path;
> But the thick umbrage—checking the wild growth

[1] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart, vol. ii. p. 204.

Of weed and sapling, along soft green turf
Beneath the branches—of itself had made
A track, that brought us to a slip of lawn,
And a small bed of water in the woods.
All round this pool both flocks and herds might drink
On its firm margin, even as from a well,
Or some stone-basin which the herdsman's hand
Had shaped for their refreshment; nor did sun,
Or wind from any quarter ever come,
But as a blessing, to this calm recess,
This glade of water and this one green field.
The spot was made by nature for herself;
The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain
Unknown to them; but it is beautiful;
And if a man should plant his cottage near,
Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
And blend its waters with his daily meal,
He would so love it, that in his death-hour
Its image would survive among his thoughts:
And therefore, my sweet Mary, this still nook,
With all its beeches, we have named from You.

In lines "To Joanna," he represents his sister-in-law's laugh—at his being spell-bound by the glorious prospect—as reverberating and re-echoing from mountain to mountain, till the scenery becomes as it were alive.

In the poem "To a Butterfly," he invites the insect to come and rest in the orchard, as in a sanctuary where it need fear no wrong, for the trees are his, and the flowers his sister's, adding—

"Sit near us, on the bough!
We'll talk of sunshine and of song:
And summer days when we were young;
Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now."

What a perfect picture of cattle feeding, in the lines—

## WRITTEN IN MARCH,

WHILE RESTING ON THE BRIDGE AT THE FOOT OF BROTHER'S WATER.

The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun;
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one!

Like an army defeated,
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;
The plough-boy is whooping—anon—anon:
There's joy in the mountains;
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing;
The rain is over and gone!

"Alice Fell" is a rhymed version of a simple incident which was related to Wordsworth by Mr. Graham of Glasgow, a brother of the author of "The Sabbath," where a little orphan girl gets her cloak entangled and torn behind a chaise, and has it kindly replaced by a new one of "duffel grey." Of this, and a few other kindred poems, Coleridge wrote:—"Notwithstanding the beauties which are to be found in each of them where the poet interposes the music of his own thoughts, they would have been more delightful to me in prose, told and managed as by Mr. Wordsworth they would have been, in a moral essay,

or on a pedestrian tour." Coleridge could appreciate Wordsworth's prose.

"The Reverie of Poor Susan," written in 1801 or 1802, was suggested to Wordsworth, probably in 1797, by his then observing the affecting music of caged birds, hanging in the London streets, during the freshness and stillness of the spring morning. The feeling, throughout the poem, is exquisitely and touchingly natural:—

### THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN.

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven: but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade:
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes!

"The Beggars," written about 1802, were met, and described to Wordsworth by his sister, near the quarry at the head of Rydal Lake, a place which was a chosen resort of vagrants travelling with their families; and he wrote, which he often did, as if he himself had seen them. He told Crabbe Robinson that he meant the poem "to exhibit the power of physical beauty, and health, and vigour in childhood, even in a state of moral depravity."

## BEGGARS.

She had a tall man's height, or more;
No bonnet screened her from the heat;
Nor claimed she service from the hood
Of a blue mantle, to her feet
Depending with a graceful flow;
Only she wore a cap pure as unsullied snow.

Her skin was of Egyptian brown;
Haughty as if her eye had seen
Its own light to a distance thrown,
She towered—fit person for a queen,
To head those ancient Amazonian files;
Or ruling bandit's wife among the Grecian isles.

Her suit no faltering scruples checked;
Forth did she pour, in current free,
Tales that could challenge no respect
But from a blind credulity;
And yet a boon I gave her; for the creature
Was beautiful to see—a weed of glorious feature:

I left her and pursued my way;
And soon before me did espy
A pair of little boys at play,
Chasing a crimson butterfly:
The taller followed with his hat in hand,
Wreathed round with yellow flowers the gayest of the land.

The other wore a rimless crown
With leaves of laurel stuck about;
And, while both followed up and down,
Each whooping with a merry shout
In their fraternal features I could trace
Unquestionable lines of that wild suppliant's face.

Yet *they*, so blithe of heart, seemed fit
For finest tasks of earth or air:
Wings let them have, and they might fit

Precursors of Aurora's car,
Scattering fresh flowers; though happier far, I ween,
To hunt their fluttering game o'er rock and level green.

They dart across my path—but lo,
Each ready with a plaintive whine!
Said I, "Not half an hour ago
Your mother has had alms of mine."
"That cannot be," one answered—"she is dead"—
I looked reproof—they saw—but neither hung his head.

"She has been dead, sir, many a day."
"Sweet boys; Heaven hears that rash reply;
It was your mother, as I say!"
And, in the twinkling of an eye,
"Come! come!" cried one, and without more ado,
Off to some other play the joyous vagrants flew!

In 1802, and subsequently in 1805, new editions of the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared, which showed that the public were not altogether led by the reviewers; however, as yet, they did little more than pay the expenses of publication.

De Quincey, who was on intimate terms with the circle, tells us, that Miss Wordsworth, her brother's constant and much loved companion, was of a dark complexion;

"Rarely," says he, "in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan." Her eyes were neither soft nor fierce nor bold, but "they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm, and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, gave to her whole demeanour, and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment, and even of self-conflict that was almost distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often suffered in

point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility."

The Wordsworths and Coleridge also associated with Professor Wilson, Southey, and genial Charles Lamb, all of whom, to borrow an expression from Jean Paul Richter, undoubtedly "belonged to the West-End of God's Universe."

On one occasion, when a book of Eastern Travels relating to the *Man-tschu* Tartars was being read aloud, Lamb remarked that they must be cannibals! And, at another time, when the Duke of Cumberland was blamed because he harshly reproved his duchess for openly embracing her son in public, on his landing at Portsmouth after a long absence, Lamb, to the astonishment of the circle, stoutly defended him, with his stuttering speech at length assigning as a reason, by way of mitigation and apology for his lordship, that they had evidently forgotten that he was "the Duke of Cu-cu-Cumberland!"

Thus, the sparkle of wit and humour often played on the surface, over the tragic depths of Lamb's refined, serious, noble and lovable nature, in which were combined "originality of mind, with delicacy of feeling and tenderness of heart." In 1802, that Earl of Lonsdale, who to the last had refused to pay the Wordsworth family their just due, died; and his successor, a man of a very different stamp, at once paid the original debt of £5000, with £3500 of interest. This sum was divided into five shares, so that there was about £1800 to each. This timely addition to his income enabled Wordsworth to arrange for marrying his cousin Mary Hutchinson, whom he had long known and loved, and who soon became his true helpmate for life, and survived him for a few years.

In July of this year (1802), before his marriage, Wordsworth with his sister visited France for a month. On

their return, they spent three weeks in London, and then he proceeded to Penrith for his bride.

On Monday, October 4, 1802, at Brompton Church, Wordsworth was married to his cousin Mary Hutchinson, and he fetched her home to Townend Cottage, Grasmere, at six o'clock on the Wednesday evening, two days after, where they sensibly settled down.

Grasmere was henceforth the place of their Sunday worship; their two infants were laid in its churchyard; and there, too, the poet himself was afterwards to be laid. Their joint income was limited, but, with simple and economical habits, they had enough, and did not allow themselves to get into debt.

Mrs. Wordsworth was not what would ordinarily be called beautiful, but her face was full of animated expression, loving and bright. She was tall, had a good figure, was of a fair complexion, and possessed, we are told, a "sweetness all but angelic, simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect, and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements."

Wordsworth ever alludes to her with the profoundest admiration and respect, and with the truest affection; and, in every way, she was well worthy of it all.

In the "Prelude" he has described the impression she made upon him *before* marriage; and the beautiful poem with which we conclude this chapter was addressed to her three years *after* his marriage.

The tender and pathetic dedication of "The White Doe of Rylstone" to her, later on, in 1815, after the loss of their two children, is touchingly sweet; and so are the two sonnets "To a Painter"—addressed to Miss Margaret Gillies—written on gazing upon his wife's portrait with blank surprise, to find, from it, for the first time, that she is getting old; but, gazing long, he "sees its truth

with unreluctant eyes," and perceives, that, unmarked, morn did pass into noon, noon into eve,

> "And the old day was welcome as the young,
> As welcome, and as beautiful—in sooth
> More beautiful, as being a thing more holy:
> Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth
> Of all thy goodness, never melancholy;
> To thy large heart and humble mind, that cast
> Into one vision, future, present, past."

## SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller betwixt life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,

Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### Wordsworth's Sonnets.

Subjects widely Varied—His careful Artistic treatment—Milton's Sonnets—Turner's Sonnets—Wordsworth's first Sonnets—Miss Wordsworth—Structure of the Italian Sonnet—'Scorn not the Sonnet'—'Nuns fret'—'Westminster Bridge'—'To Sleep'—'The World is too much with us'—'To R. B. Haydon'—'On a Picture by Sir George Beaumont—'A Parsonage'—'Personal Talk'—'It is a Beauteous Evening'—'Roman Antiquities'—'Not Love, not War'—'A Poet'—'Flute Music"—'Imagination'—'A Thrush'—'The Trossachs'—Scott Sonnet—'Highland Hut'—'Mossgiel Farm'—'On Liberty and Independence'—'Written in London'—'Milton'—'Great Men'—'Dover'—'We must be free'—'Men of Kent'—'To Toussaint L'Ouverture'—'Two Voices'—'Swiss Sonnets'—'Calais'—'Last Supper'—'Fall of the Aar'—'Cologne Cathedral'—'Scenery between Namur and Liege'— From Michael Angelo—'Home to England'—'Duddon Sonnets'—'Ecclesiastical Series'—'Canute'—'Wickliffe'—'Bible'—'Latimer and Ridley'—'Laud'—'The Scottish Covenanters'—'Pilgrim Fathers'—'King's College Chapel, Cambridge'—'Blest Statesman He'—'Lowther'—'Clarkson'—'Tranquillity'—'Punishment of Death'—'Age'—'Why art thou silent?'—'Rest'—'Secure Relief.'

The Sonnets of Wordsworth, of which there are between four and five hundred, though highly imaginative, are characterized by a noble simplicity of language. In a widely varied range of subject and feeling, each sonnet is treated with a straightforward, cheerful, winning, natural sweetness. Palgrave, in speaking of an exquisitely tender sonnet, and a poem, of Cowper's, both addressed to Mary Unwin, pronounces him to be "our highest master in simple pathos;" in Petrarch's Sonnets, he notes "ethereal grace and perfect finish;" in Shakspere's, "pas-

sion;" and Milton's, he says, stand "supreme in stateliness;" while Wordsworth's, as he justly observes, are unsurpassed "in depth and delicacy."

Sir Henry Taylor, too, long ago, wrote of Wordsworth's Sonnets:—"Few are the works of art in this kind which are so pure in their material, so graceful in their execution, so delicately wrought, so exquisitely chiselled. Yet bright and ornate as many of these productions are, there is in them, no less than in his other poems, a constant abstinence from antithesis and false effects. The words are always felt to be used, first and mainly because they are those which best express the meaning; secondly, and subordinately, because they convey to the ear the sounds which best harmonize with the meaning, and with each other. There is hardly one of Mr. Wordsworth's sonnets which end in a point. Pointed lines will sometimes occur in the course of them, as thought will sometimes naturally take a pointed shape in the mind; but whether it takes that shape or another is obviously treated as a matter of indifference; nothing is sacrificed to it, and at the close of the sonnet, where the adventitious effect of the point might be apt to outshine the intrinsic value of the subject, it seems to have been studiously avoided. Mr. Wordsworth's sonnet never goes off, as it were, with a clap, or repercussion at the close; but is thrown up like a rocket, breaks into light, and falls in a soft shower of brightness. To none, indeed, of the minor forms of poetry are Mr. Wordsworth's powers better adapted; there is none to which discrimination in thought, and aptitude in language are more essential; and there never was a poet who reached so near perfection in these particulars as Mr. Wordsworth."[1]

[1] *Quarterly Review*, No. 104.

Although, as a rule, avoiding love subjects, and manifesting little of the passion of Shakspere, or of Mrs. Browning, yet the calm wisdom and rounded artistic perfection of his work in this form, taken along with the extent of it, entitle him to rank as the first of our English Sonnet writers. Many of his sonnets, especially those on liberty, have the pure Miltonic ring about them. Milton however only wrote eighteen English Sonnets — "soul-animating strains, alas too few!" Of these, that, *On the late Massacre in Piemont*, beginning, "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones," where all are good, is perhaps the finest.

While admiring a few single world-famous sonnets, ranging from Elizabethan days down to that magnificent sonnet of Keats *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*, and some others by more recent, or living writers,—after Wordsworth's, we know of no collection of sonnets which, for number, quality, and variety of subject and treatment, taken as a whole, are so worthy of admiration and loving study as those written by the late Charles Tennyson Turner.[1]

Of these, in a sonnet on the new church and spire built at Grasby by Mr. Turner, the Rev. Richard Wilton appreciatingly writes:—

> "Meanwhile another structure not of stone,
> A life-work built of pure and lofty rhyme,
> Beneath the shadow of that spire has grown
> To lend its beauty to the aftertime,
> When Grasby shall assert its kindred claim,
> With cherished Grasmere to poetic fame."

[1] *Collected Sonnets, Old and New*, by Charles Tennyson Turner. London, C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880.—For articles, by the present writer, on the Sonnets of Charles Tennyson Turner, as published in previous editions, see *International Review*, September, 1875; or *Atlas Essays*, vol. ii. pp. 155–180; and *The Sunday at Home*, November, 1876.—A. J. S.

Wordsworth gives the following interesting account of what first led him to commence the writing of sonnets:—"In the cottage of Town-End, one afternoon in 1801," (it was on May 21st) "my sister read to me the sonnets of Milton. I had long been well acquainted with them, but I was particularly struck, on that occasion, with the dignified simplicity and majestic harmony that runs through most of them — in character so totally different from the Italian, and still more so from Shakspere's fine sonnets. I took fire, if I may be allowed to say so, and produced three sonnets the same afternoon — the first I ever wrote, except an irregular one at school. Of these three, the only one I distinctly remember is, 'I grieved for Buonaparte,' &c.: one was never written down; the third, which was I believe preserved, I cannot particularize."[1]

Elsewhere, in the *Advertisement to the collected edition of the Sonnets, 1838*, he says:—"My admiration of some of the sonnets of Milton first tempted me to write in that form. The fact is not mentioned from a notion that it will be deemed of any importance by the reader, but merely as a public acknowledgment of one of the innumerable obligations, which, as a poet and a man, I am under to our great fellow-countryman."

There is something fresh and touchingly beautiful in Miss Wordsworth's love of nature, and devoted affection for her brother; and, to her constant and sympathetic companionship, his vigorous verse undoubtedly owes much of its refined delicacy and sweetness. Her diaries display genius of a high and kindred order, showing that she was, ever, all eye and ear for her brother. Thus, adown distant ages, her name will deservedly continue to be associated with his.

[1] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart, vol. iii. pp. 52–3.

The fourteen lines of the regular Italian Sonnet, in iambic measure and all of equal length, were divided into two groups of eight and six lines respectively, with a pause in the sense between them: the first group was called the *Octave*—consisting of two quadrains; and the last group the Sestette—consisting of two tercets. From the palling sameness in the final sounds of the Italian language, to ensure variety, it was stipulated that there should be at least four different terminal sounds in a sonnet. The rhymes, too, were arranged in a certain formal sequence, in accord with certain recognized musical requirements.

This strict ideal order of the Italian formal sonnet, we find exemplified by Wordsworth, in that one, beginning "The World is too much with us; late and soon," and others occurring in the following pages; but—like Shakspere, Milton, and Charles Tennyson Turner—Wordsworth, availing himself of the greater capabilities of English rhyme, often introduces more terminal sounds, and varies, at will, the order of their recurrence.

Among his numerous sonnets, are—the "Miscellaneous" series; those composed in "Scotland;" those dedicated to "National Independence and Liberty,"—which perhaps are the finest of their kind ever written by any poet; then there are the sonnets written on his Continental Tours; those on "The River Duddon;" the "Ecclesiastical" Series, which, however, in point of fact, is one long poem, each sonnet forming a separate stanza or link in a continuous chain; the fine sonnets dedicated to "Liberty and Order;" and lastly the series "On the Punishment of Death."

While these are all carefully finished—and there are few of them which do not contain remarkable lines,—a number of sonnets stand out from the others, as being

absolutely perfect in their way. We shall glance at a few of these.

One, in which he apologizes for the use of the sonnet, quoting the highest precedents, is as strikingly beautiful, as it is comprehensive, condensed, and cogent:—

> "Scorn not the sonnet; critic, you have frowned,
> Mindless of its just honours;—with this key
> Shakspeare unlocked his heart; the melody
> Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
> A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
> Camöens soothed with it an exile's grief;
> The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
> Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
> His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,
> It cheered mild Spenser, called from faery-land
> To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
> Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
> The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!"

Of this admirable sonnet, Professor Henry Reed has well said:—"What could be more finished, more perfect, whether you regard it for its mere fancy, or as a piece of eulogy or criticism? What more natural in the expression, more free from everything like false effect, more varied in its harmonies? What melody could be sweeter than the fall of its close? Is there a word that could be taken away, or one that could be added?"

In answer to those who object to the sonnet, on account of its confined space and the severe trammels of its form, Wordsworth says—that, in certain moods, the poet not only does not feel these to be difficulties, but feels pastime and solace in conforming to them:—

> "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;
> And hermits are contented with their cells;

And students with their pensive citadels:
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:
In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground;
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found."

In the sonnet composed on "Westminster Bridge," we have a very perfect example of metrical form; while the feeling with which one views a great city, ere it wakes from its slumbers, is finely rendered. In Miss Wordsworth's *Diary*, under date July 30th, 1802, she thus describes the scene:—"Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river—a multitude of little boats, made a beautiful sight as we crossed *Westminster Bridge*, the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, and were spread out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles." The sonnet was then suggested; but it was not composed till he was returning on September third.

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE,

Sept. 3, 1803.

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty;
This city now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Of his sonnets "To Sleep," Sara Coleridge wrote:—"The three sonnets to Sleep are very beautiful and peculiar; not Miltonic, or Shaksperian, or Petrarchian, nor like the productions of any later sonnetteers, but entirely Wordsworthian and inimitable." The first begins—

"O gentle Sleep! do they belong to thee,
These twinklings of oblivion?"

The second

"Fond words have often been spoken to thee Sleep."

We quote the whole of the third, which, with its many lulling associations, is beautiful exceedingly:—

## TO SLEEP.

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
By turns have all been thought of; yet I lie
Sleepless, and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, sleep! by any stealth:
So do not let me wear to-night away:

Without thee what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessed barrier betwixt day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

The following sonnet is a fine protest against the debasing influence of worldliness, which crushes out all devotional or natural sentiment, so that Mammon-worship is, to that extent, actually worse than the old Pagan superstitions:—

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for every thing, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Keats addressed two sonnets to Haydon the painter: the following is Wordsworth's tribute to the genius of that artist:—

TO R. B. HAYDON, Esq.

High is our calling, friend!—Creative art
(Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues,)
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.

And oh! when nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness—
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!

Wordsworth, when residing in the Parsonage at Grasmere and wandering by the brook near the church, composed a sonnet "On a Picture painted by Sir George Beaumont," which, along with one on "Twilight," when read by Crabbe Robinson to Ludwig Tieck, made him exclaim, that Wordsworth was "an English Göethe." The former of these is a happy specimen of art applied to secondary description:—

UPON THE SIGHT OF A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE.

(Painted by Sir G. H. Beaumont, Bart.)

Praised be the art whose subtle power could stay
Yon cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape;
Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day;
Which stopped that band of travellers on their way,
Ere they were lost within the shady wood;
And showed the bark upon the glassy flood
For ever anchored in her sheltering bay.
Soul-soothing art! which morning, noontide, even,
Do serve with all their changeful pageantry;
Thou, with ambition modest yet sublime,
Here, for the sight of mortal man, hast given
To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
The appropriate calm of blest eternity.

The Parsonage described in the next sonnet is that of Jones, the friend of his student days. Professor Henry Reed speaks highly of it, as "a piece of landscape description, illuminated with a very rich moral light, the

imagery of the closing lines, especially, evincing admirable taste:"—

A PARSONAGE IN OXFORDSHIRE.

Where holy ground begins, unhallowed ends,
Is marked by no distinguishable line;
The turf unites, the pathways intertwine;
And, wheresoe'er the stealing footstep tends,
Garden, and that domain where kindred, friends,
And neighbours rest together, here confound
Their several features, mingled like the sound
Of many waters, or as evening blends
With shady night. Soft airs, from shrub and flower,
Waft fragrant greetings to each silent grave;
And while those lofty poplars gently wave
Their tops, between them comes and goes a sky
Bright as the glimpses of eternity,
To saints accorded in their mortal hour.

The series of four sonnets, entitled "Personal Talk," was written during the early years of Wordsworth's married life, when surrounded by their little children, and finely reflects the happy, domestic, evenly tenor of his way. In the first, he tells us how little he cared for gossip, preferring to listen in silence, by his cottage fire, to the flapping of the flame,

"Or kettle whispering its faint under-song."

The second, is a protest against malice, evil-speaking, and worldliness. The third, treats of the pleasure we find in nature and books, where the lofty sanctifies the low, and where each is "a substantial world both pure and good," where he finds a plenteous store of personal themes; and he instances two, from Shakspere and Spenser, which, to him, were pre-eminently dear, namely—

"The gentle Lady married to the Moor;
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb."

The last of these four sonnets, superlatively lovely, we quote in full. It is interesting to note how the wish for a name, herein expressed, was, in after years when fully attained by Wordsworth, completely merged in the desire that his writings should do good; and, of how comparatively little moment fame came to be regarded by him, when viewed in the light of the great eternity which he was fast nearing!—

"Nor can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking; rancour, never sought,
Comes to me not: malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought:
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbour, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them—and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares—
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!
Oh! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days."

The sonnet which we next give was composed on the beach near Calais, in the autumn of 1802, and is a marvellous picture of nature's calm tranquillity merging every thought and feeling in adoration:—

"It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me here,

If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not."

In the sonnet on "Roman Antiquities," he says, that relics are profitless unless they can chasten fancies or lull agitations, giving us something human to think about—finely adding:—

"Heaven out of view, our wishes what are they?
Our fond regrets tenacious in their grasp?
The sage's theory? the poet's lay?
Mere Fibulæ without a robe to clasp;
Obsolete lamps, whose light no time recalls;
Urns without ashes, tearless lacrymals!"

In the sonnet beginning "Not Love, not War," the last two lines of which are exquisitely beautiful, Wordsworth asserts that the tuneful shell is not alone inspired by the tumultuous swell of civil conflict, the wrecks of change, or Duty struggling with strange afflictions; but that the muse is not loth, also, to range where untroubled peace and concord dwell—

"Watching the blue smoke of the elmy grange,
Skyward ascending from the twilight dell.
Meek aspirations please her, lone endeavour,
And sage content, and placid melancholy;
She loves to gaze upon a crystal river,
Diaphanous, because it travels slowly;
Soft is the music that would charm for ever;
The flower of sweetest smell is shy and lowly."

The sonnet beginning, "A Poet!—He hath put his heart to school," inculcates the necessity of the artist emancipating himself from formal rule and precept; and, of going direct to the fountain-head of Nature, if he

would not have Scorn write his epitaph, after the critics have killed him. He says, "Thy Art be Nature; the live current quaff," concluding with the following fine illustration:—

> "How does the meadow-flower its bloom unfold?
> Because the lovely little flower is free
> Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold;
> And so the grandeur of the forest-tree
> Comes not by casting in a formal mould,
> But from its *own* divine vitality."

The pleasing sonnet on the effect of "Flute Music" was suggested to Wordsworth at Hackett, which is the craggy ridge that rises between the two Langdales, looking towards Windermere, and where the cottage of the pair described in the fifth book of the "Excursion" stood. The musician was the Rev. P. Tilbrook of Peterhouse, and, for the Genius alluded to, the reader is referred to "The Vision of Mirza," in the *Spectator*:—

> "The fairest, brightest hues of ether fade;
> The sweetest notes must terminate and die;
> O friend! thy flute has breathed a harmony
> Softly resounded through this rocky glade;
> Such strains of rapture as the Genius played
> In his still haunt on Bagdad's summit high;
> He who stood visible to Mirza's eye,
> Never before to human sight betrayed.
> Lo, in the vale, the mists of evening spread!
> The visionary arches are not there,
> Nor the green islands, nor the shining seas;
> Yet sacred is to me this mountain's head,
> From which I have been lifted on the breeze
> Of harmony, above all earthly care."

In the sonnet beginning "Weak is the will of man, his judgment blind," he shows, how mournfully our lot of

mortal days might be painted, were the elevating and glorious faculty awanting which colours "life's dark cloud with orient rays;"—

"Imagination is that sacred power,
Imagination lofty and refined;
'Tis hers to pluck the amaranthine flower
Of Faith, and round the sufferer's temples bind
Wreaths that endure affliction's heaviest shower,
And do not shrink from sorrow's keenest wind."

The conclusion of the sonnet on a "Thrush"—beginning,

"'Tis he whose yester-evening's high disdain
Beat back the roaring storm"—

written on the singing of the bird which seemed to restrain his glee and renounce his joyous vein, attuning his voice "to suit the temper of yon Moon," finely sets forth a great moral truth:—

"In heaven above,
And earth below, they best can serve true gladness
Who meet most feelingly the calls of sadness."

Many of Wordsworth's sonnets written in Scotland are very fine. Of that on "The Trossachs," Sir Henry Taylor remarks—"How skilfully does that suggestion in the parenthesis, of the sunshiny colouring of the aspen in October, adumbrate the cheerfulness to be bestowed by natural piety upon the decline of life! preparing for the principal illustration of the same idea in the song of the redbreast, which only begins to sing when other birds have ceased:"—

THE TROSSACHS.

There's not a nook within this solemn Pass,
But were an apt confessional for One
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,

That Life is but a tale of morning grass,
Withered at eve. From scenes of art that chase
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes
Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass
Untouched, unbreathed upon. Thrice happy quest,
If from a golden perch of aspen spray
(October's workmanship to rival May)
The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast
This moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay,
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest.

Thirty years before, he had, nearly on the same beautiful spot, written "Stepping Westward," an ethereal poem full of youth and hope. This later poem is "stilled down to perfect autumnal quiet;" but, though sobered and pensive, still, at heart, it is peaceful. It was coloured, Wordsworth tells us, by the melancholy remembrance of his recent visit to Sir Walter Scott, who, broken down in health, as a last and doubtful resource, was then about to set out for the continent of Europe. Of him, he wrote the following sonnet:—

ON THE DEPARTURE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT FROM ABBOTSFORD FOR NAPLES.

A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain,
Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light
Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height:
Spirits of Power, assembled there, complain
For kindred Power departing from their sight;
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe strain,
Saddens his voice again, and yet again.
Lift up your hearts, ye Mourners! for the might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;
Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue
Than sceptred King or laurelled Conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous Potentate. Be true,

Ye winds of ocean, and the midland sea,
Wafting your Charge to soft Parthenope!

In the "Highland Hut," we have the claims of the deserving but lonely poor on our loving sympathy, well set forth, by one who always acted on the theory which he everywhere clearly enunciates in his poetry:—

## HIGHLAND HUT.

See what gay wild flowers deck this earth-built Cot,
Whose smoke, forth-issuing whence and how it may,
Shines in the greeting of the Sun's first ray
Like wreaths of vapour without stain or blot.
The limpid mountain rill avoids it not;
And why shouldst thou? If rightly trained and bred,
Humanity is humble,—finds no spot
Which her Heaven-guided feet refuse to tread.
The walls are cracked, sunk is the flowery roof,
Undressed the pathway leading to the door:
But love, as Nature loves, the lonely Poor;
Search, for their worth, some gentle heart wrong-proof,
Meek, patient, kind, and, were its trials fewer,
Belike less happy.—Stand no more aloof!

How charmingly Burns' "daisy," crushed beneath the ploughshare in an evil hour, is made to live again in the following sonnet!—

"'There!' said a stripling, pointing with meek pride
Towards a low roof with green trees half concealed,
'Is Mossgiel farm; and that's the very field
Where Burns ploughed up the Daisy.' Far and wide
A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried
Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose;
And, by that simple notice, the repose
Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.
Beneath 'the random *bield* of clod or stone'
Myriads of Daisies have shone forth in flower

Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
Have passed away, less happy than the One
That by the unwilling ploughshare died to prove
The tender charm of Poetry and Love."

The sonnets on "National Independence and Liberty" are very noble. He himself justly claims, that virtuous liberty has been the scope of his pure song; and that, he himself did not shrink from hope, even in the worst moment of evil days; for "hope," he says, is—

"the paramount *duty* that Heaven lays
For its own honour, on man's suffering heart."

The sonnet, in which occurs that well-known phrase "plain living and high thinking," was written, Wordsworth informs us, immediately after his return from France to London, when he was particularly struck with the vanity and parade to be seen in our own country, especially in the great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet and desolation that the Revolution had produced in France. If this be borne in mind, the reader will not think, that in this, and other sonnets which express similar sentiments, he has at all exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered amongst us by undisturbed wealth:—

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802.

O friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:
The wealthiest man among us is the best;
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,

This is idolatry; and these we adore;
Plain living and high thinking are no more;
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

Nothing finer has ever been written about Milton, than this from Wordsworth's pen:—

LONDON, 1802.

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

Speaking of the statesmanship of that period, as contrasted with the temporizing policy of his own day, what a fine eulogium he pronounces on those men who helped to make England what it is!—

Great men have been among us; hands that penned
And tongues that uttered wisdom, better none:
The later Sidney, Marvel, Harrington,
Young Vane, and others who called Milton friend.
These moralists could act and comprehend:
They knew how genuine glory was put on;
Taught us how rightfully a nation shone
In splendour; what strength was, that would not bend
But in magnanimous meekness. France, 'tis strange,

Hath brought forth no such souls as we had then.
Perpetual emptiness! unceasing change!
No single volume paramount, no code,
No master spirit, no determined road;
But equally a want of books and men!

Standing, inland, in a hollow vale near Dover, on the 29th of August 1802, when the sea was calm and the air clear, he looked out on the coast of France, plainly seen across the silver strip—only a span of water, like a lake or river, yet a power, mighty for evil or for good. Then, he thus finely makes use of the liquid barrier, to enunciate a great moral lesson:—

"Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and power, and deity,
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
Only the nations shall be great and free!"

In the sonnet beginning "It is not to be thought of that the flood," he patriotically says of British freedom:—

"We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakspeare spake: the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold."

Of this fine sonnet, and that "To the Men of Kent," —addressed in particular to the inhabitants of that part of Kent which was never subdued in the Norman Invasion—to the men who, on capitulation, obtained glorious terms and the confirmation of their own charters, some of which old customs still survive—Robertson of Brighton, as we have seen, expressed his highest admiration, saying it did the heart good to meet with one who was not ashamed to love his country with his whole heart

and being—"In this age of cosmopolitanism, when we are, forsooth, too much philanthropists to be patriots; when any deep and strong emotion of love to our country is reckoned as nothing more than the sacredness of the schoolboy's affection; when our young people who have travelled can find no words more capable of expressing their contempt than these—'It is so English:'"—

TO THE MEN OF KENT, OCTOBER, 1803.

Vanguard of liberty, ye men of Kent,
Ye children of a soil that doth advance
Her haughty brow against the coast of France,
Now is the time to prove your hardiment!
To France be words of invitation sent!
They from their fields can see the countenance
Of your fierce war, may ken the glittering lance,
And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.
Left single, in bold parley, ye of yore,
Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath;
Confirmed the charters that were yours before;—
No parleying now! In Britain is one breath;
We all are with you now from shore to shore:—
Ye men of Kent, 'tis victory or death!

Landor thought the lines "To Toussaint L'Ouverture," the deliverer of Hayti, who, in 1803, died in a French prison, "among the noblest of Wordsworth's sonnets:"—

TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE.

Toussaint, the most unhappy man of men!
Whether the whistling rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;—
O miserable chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not! do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,

Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee, air, earth, and skies:
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

Crabbe Robinson tells us, that Wordsworth desired popularity for the next splendid sonnet, as a test of elevation and moral purity on the part of his readers:—

### THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND.

Two voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty voice:
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven:
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft;
Then cleave, oh cleave, to that which still is left;
For, high-souled maid, what sorrow would it be
That mountain floods should thunder as before,
And ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful voice be heard by thee!

### THE TOWN OF SCHWYTZ.

By antique fancy trimmed—though lowly, bred
To dignity—in thee, O Schwytz! are seen
The genuine features of the golden mean;
Equality by prudence governèd,
Or jealous nature ruling in her stead;
And, therefore, art thou blest with peace, serene
As that of the sweet fields and meadows green
In unambitious compass round thee spread.

Majestic Berne, high on her guardian steep,
Holding a central station of command,
Might well be styled this noble body's head;
Thou, lodged 'mid mountainous entrenchments deep,
Its heart; and ever may the heroic land
Thy name, O Schwytz, in happy freedom keep.

## FEELINGS OF THE TYROLESE.

The land we from our fathers had in trust,
And to our children will transmit, or die:
This is our maxim, this our piety;
And God and Nature say that it is just.
That which we *would* perform in arms—we must!
We read the dictate in the infant's eye;
In the wife's smile; and in the placid sky;
And, at our feet, amid the silent dust
Of them that were before us.—Sing aloud
Old songs, the precious music of the heart!
Give, herds and flocks, your voices to the wind!
While we go forth, a self-devoted crowd,
With weapons in the fearless hand, to assert
Our virtue, and to vindicate mankind.

In the sonnet beginning "Say what is Honour?" how admirably he defines it to be—"the finest sense of justice which the human mind can frame!"

In 1802, Miss Wordsworth, at Calais, enters in her Diary:—"Delightful walks in the evening: seeing far off in the west the coast of England, like a cloud, crested with Dover Castle, the evening star, and the glory of the sky: the reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself; purple waves, brighter than precious stones, for ever melting away upon the sands." Such were the circumstances under which Wordsworth penned the following sonnet:—

## COMPOSED BY THE SEA-SIDE, NEAR CALAIS.

August, 1802.

Fair star of evening, splendour of the west,
Star of my country!—on the horizon's brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom: yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the nations. Thou, I think,
Should'st be my country's emblem, and should'st wink,
Bright star! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, it is England, there it lies.
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory! I with many a fear
For my dear country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

Here is another exquisite evening sonnet, on the mysterious solemnizing power of Twilight, and the approach of Night; carrying us charmed, on meditative wings, far away into a remote shadowy Past, and into vast illimitable regions of Time and Space:—

"Hail, Twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour!
Not dull art thou as undiscerning Night;
But studious only to remove from sight
Day's mutable distinctions.—Ancient power!
Thus did the waters gleam, the mountains lower,
To the rude Briton, when, in wolf-skin vest
Here roving wild, he laid him down to rest
On the bare rock, or through a leafy bower
Looked ere his eyes were closed. By him was seen
The self-same vision which we now behold,
At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power! brought forth;
These mighty barriers, and the gulf between;
The floods, the stars,—a spectacle as old
As the beginning of the heavens and earth!"

Wordsworth, as we have already seen, possessed the art of reproducing a painting in words; and those who have been privileged to gaze on the original of Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper at Milan, so soft and pleasing as compared with the impression of liny hardness, conveyed by most engravings or copies of it, will at once recognize the justice of his words regarding that great master's work:—

THE LAST SUPPER,

BY LEONARDO DA VINCI, IN THE REFECTORY OF THE CONVENT OF MARIA DELLA GRAZIA, MILAN.

Though searching damps and many an envious flaw
Have marred this work; the calm ethereal grace,
The love deep-seated in the Saviour's face,
The mercy, goodness, have not failed to awe
The elements; as they do melt and thaw
The heart of the beholder—and erase
(At least for one rapt moment) every trace
Of disobedience to the primal law.
The annunciation of the dreadful truth
Made to the twelve, survives: lip, forehead, cheek,
And hand reposing on the board in ruth
Of what it utters, while the unguilty seek
Unquestionable meanings,—still bespeak
A labour worthy of eternal youth!

How finely, in the following sonnet, do the beautiful fragile wild flowers peeping from cleft and chink, by contrast, enhance the grandeur of the waterfall that thunders over the steep rocky brink!—

THE FALL OF THE AAR.—HANDEC.

From the fierce aspect of this river, throwing
His giant body o'er the steep rock's brink,
Back in astonishment and fear we shrink:
But gradually a calmer look bestowing.

Flowers we espy beside the torrent growing;
Flowers that peep forth from many a cleft and chink,
And, from the whirlwind of his anger, drink
Hues ever fresh, in rocky fortress blowing:
They suck, from breath that, threatening to destroy,
Is more benignant than the dewy eve—
Beauty, and life, and motions as of joy:
Nor doubt but He to whom yon pine-trees nod
Their heads in sign of worship, nature's God,
These humbler adorations will receive.

Of the Cathedral at Cologne, with its vast architectural design, only recently completed, and its fine old matchless stained-glass emblazonings, he writes:—

IN THE CATHEDRAL AT COLOGNE.

Oh, for the help of angels to complete
This temple—angels governed by a plan
How gloriously pursued by daring man,
Studious that *He* might not disdain the seat
Who dwells in heaven! But that inspiring heat
Hath failed; and now, ye powers! whose gorgeous wings
And splendid aspect yon emblazonings
But faintly picture, 'twere an office meet
For you, on these unfinished shafts to try
The midnight virtues of your harmony:—
This vast design might tempt you to repeat
Strains that call forth upon empyreal ground
Immortal fabrics—rising to the sound
Of penetrating harps and voices sweet!

His masterly power of landscape painting is well exemplified in the sonnet which we next quote:—

SCENERY BETWEEN NAMUR AND LIEGE.

What lovelier home could gentle fancy choose?
Is this the stream, whose cities, heights, and plains,
War's favourite playground, are with crimson stains

Familiar, as the morn with pearly dews?
The morn, that now, along the silver Meuse,
Spreading her peaceful ensigns, calls the swains
To tend their silent boats and ringing wains,
Or strip the bough whose mellow fruit bestrews
The ripening corn beneath it. As mine eyes
Turn from the fortified and threatening hill,
How sweet the prospect of yon watery glade,
With its gray rocks clustering in pensive shade,—
That, shaped like old monastic turrets, rise
From the smooth meadow ground, serene and still!

Wordsworth also executed some admirable translations from Michael Angelo. To do justice to such renderings, it is absolutely requisite that the translator should possess poetical powers, in some degree commensurate with his author. Hence, the beauty of Coleridge's translations from the German of Schiller; and of these sonnets of Wordsworth's from the Italian. That one beginning, "Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace," closes thus:—

"His hope is treacherous only whose love dies
With beauty, which is varying every hour;
But, in chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power
Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower,
That breathes on earth the air of paradise."

The next sonnet, beginning "No mortal object did these eyes behold," ends by declaring—

"Love betters what is best
Even here below, but more in heaven above."

The following sonnet, also from Michael Angelo, we give entire:—

TO THE SUPREME BEING.

The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed
If thou the spirit give by which I pray:
My unassisted heart is barren clay.

That of its native self can nothing feed:
Of good and pious works Thou art the seed,
That quickens only where Thou say'st it may:
Unless Thou show to us Thine own true way
No man can find it: Father! Thou must lead.
Do Thou, then, breathe those thoughts into my mind
By which such virtue may in me be bred
That in Thy holy footsteps I may tread;
The fetters of my tongue do Thou unbind,
That I may have the power to sing of Thee,
And sound Thy praises everlastingly.

How joyously he hails and sets foot on his dear native land after his Continental wanderings!—

COMPOSED IN THE VALLEY, NEAR DOVER, ON THE DAY OF LANDING.

Here, on our native soil, we breathe once more.
The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound
Of bells,—those boys who in yon meadow-ground
In white-sleeved shirts are playing,—and the roar
Of the waves breaking on the chalky shore;
All, all are English. Oft have I looked round
With joy in Kent's green vales; but never found
Myself so satisfied in heart before.
Europe is yet in bonds; but let that pass,
Thought for another moment. Thou art free,
My Country! and 'tis joy enough and pride
For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass
Of England once again, and hear and see,
With such a dear Companion at my side.

In the series of sonnets on "The River Duddon," he traces the river, noting its many interesting associations, from its mountain source, near the "Three Shire Stones," down its banks, through the Vale of Seathwaite on to the Duddon sands, and into the deep; while the last of the series is a beautiful "After-thought."

The "gospel teacher" alluded to in the following sonnet is the Rev. Robert Walker, of whom Wordsworth gives a long account in the notes appended to the "Duddon Sonnets." He was the Pastor described in the Seventh Book of the *Excursion* as

> "A labourer, with moral virtue girt,
> With spiritual graces like a glory crowned;"

and he lies buried in Seathwaite Churchyard.

XVIII.

SEATHWAITE CHAPEL.

Sacred Religion! "mother of form and fear,"
Dread arbitress of mutable respect,
New rites ordaining when the old are wrecked,
Or cease to please the fickle worshipper;
If one strong wish may be embosomed here,
Mother of love! for this deep vale, protect
Truth's holy lamp, pure source of bright effect,
Gifted to purge the vapoury atmosphere
That seeks to stifle it;—as in those days
When this low pile a Gospel Teacher knew,
Whose good works formed an endless retinue:
Such priest as Chaucer sang in fervent lays;
Such as the Heaven-taught skill of Herbert drew;
And tender Goldsmith crowned with deathless praise!

XXXII.

Not hurled precipitous from steep to steep;
Lingering no more 'mid flower-enamelled lands
And blooming thickets; nor by rocky bands
Held; but in radiant progress toward the Deep
Where mightiest rivers into powerless sleep
Sink and forget their nature—*now* expands
Majestic Duddon, over smooth flat sands
Gliding in silence with unfettered sweep!
Beneath an ampler sky a region wide

Is opened round him :—hamlets, towers, and towns,
And blue-topped hills, behold him from afar;
In stately mien to sovereign Thames allied
Spreading his bosom under Kentish downs,
With commerce freighted, or triumphant war.

XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

But here no cannon thunders to the gale;
Upon the wave no haughty pendants cast
A crimson splendour; lowly is the mast
That rises here, and humbly spread, the sail;
While, less disturbed than in the narrow Vale
Through which with strange vicissitudes he passed,
The Wanderer seeks that receptacle vast
Where all his unambitious functions fail.
And may thy Poet, cloud-born stream! be free—
The sweets of earth contentedly resigned,
And each tumultuous working left behind
At seemly distance—to advance like Thee;
Prepared, in peace of heart, in calm of mind
And soul, to mingle with Eternity!

The Ecclesiastical Series of Sonnets testifies to his loving admiration of the Church of England, with her Scriptural services—pure, wise, and orderly; while he regarded the Church of Rome, with her pretension of authority, as the insidious and deadly foe of England, both in regard to Church and State, and, as everywhere opposed to freedom and progress. Hence, on civil as well as religious grounds, he strenuously opposed state concessions, which could not reasonably be expected to satisfy those who wanted the whole, and which, besides being morally wrong, were only admitting a wedge which was sure to be driven home. In short he regarded the removal of Romish disabilities as "opening the way to Romish domination;" and he apprehended that they who were advocating such a re-

moval, on the plea of civil liberty, were "unconsciously promoting the cause of spiritual tyranny."

Many of the sonnets in this series conserve events of historic interest. We would instance that on "Canute" listening to the singing of the monks in Ely, as he is being rowed along the Mere; that on Wycliffe; and that on the "Translation of the Bible":—

### CANUTE.

A pleasant music floats along the Mere,
From monks in Ely chanting service high,
While-as Canùte the King is rowing by:
"My Oarsman," quoth the mighty King, "draw near,
That we the sweet song of the Monks may hear!"
He listens, (all past conquests and all schemes
Of future vanishing like empty dreams,)
Heart-touched, and haply not without a tear.
The Royal Minstrel, ere the choir is still,
While his free Barge skims the smooth flood along,
Gives to that rapture an accordant Rhyme.
O suffering Earth! be thankful; sternest clime
And rudest age are subject to the thrill
Of heaven-descended Piety and Song.

### WICLIFFE.

Once more the Church is seized with sudden fear,
And at her call is Wicliffe disinhumed;
Yea, his dry bones to ashes are consumed,
And flung into the brook that travels near;
Forthwith, that ancient Voice which Streams can hear,
Thus speaks, (that voice which walks upon the wind,
Though seldom heard by busy human kind)—
"As thou these ashes, little Brook! wilt bear
Into the Avon, Avon to the tide
Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,
Into main Ocean they, this deed accurst

An emblem yields to friends and enemies
How the bold Teacher's Doctrine, sanctified
By truth, shall spread, throughout the world dispersed."

### TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

But, to outweigh all harm, the sacred Book,
In dusty sequestration wrapt too long,
Assumes the accents of our native tongue;
And he who guides the plough, or wields the crook,
With understanding spirit now may look
Upon her records, listen to her song,
And sift her laws—much wondering that the wrong,
Which Faith has suffered, Heaven could calmly brook.
Transcendent boon! noblest that earthly King
Ever bestowed to equalize and bless
Under the weight of wretchedness!
But passions spread like plagues, and thousands wild
With bigotry shall tread the Offering
Beneath their feet—detested and defiled.

The following sonnet is also very noble:—

### LATIMER AND RIDLEY.

How fast the Marian death-list is unrolled!
See Latimer and Ridley in the might
Of faith, stand coupled for a common flight!
One (like those prophets whom God sent of old)
Transfigured, from this kindling hath foretold
A torch of inextinguishable light;
The other gains a confidence as bold;
And thus they foil their enemy's despite.
The penal instruments, the shows of crime,
Are glorified while this once-mitred pair
Of saintly Friends, the "murtherer's chain partake,
Corded, and burning at the social stake:"
Earth never witnessed object more sublime
In constancy, in fellowship more fair!

That on "Walton's Book of Lives" is a starry ring

"Around meek Walton's heavenly memory."

Wordsworth, although he could appreciate Laud's motives for maintaining external helps to inward devotion, while condemning his mode of carrying them out; and, although he could even apologize for that cruel pious zealot, as one—

"Prejudged by foes determined not to spare
An old weak man for vengeance thrown aside,"

yet, loving liberty with all his soul, he could also, at the same time, heartily sympathize with the noble struggles of the Covenanters, and thus strongly deprecate the cruel ruthless treatment to which they were subjected:—

PERSECUTION OF THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS.

When Alpine vales threw forth a suppliant cry,
The majesty of England interposed
And the sword stopped; the bleeding wounds were closed;
And faith preserved her ancient purity.
How little boots that precedent of good,
Scorned or forgotten, thou canst testify,
For England's shame, O Sister Realm! from wood,
Mountain, and moor, and crowded street, where lie
The headless martyrs of the Covenant,
Slain by Compatriot-protestants that draw
From councils senseless as intolerant
Their warrant. Bodies fall by wild sword-law;
But who would force the Soul, tilts with a straw
Against a Champion cased in adamant.

At the suggestion of Professor Henry Reed, Wordsworth added to the Ecclesiastical Series three sonnets on the "Aspects of Christianity in America," giving due meed of praise to the Pilgrim Fathers, who for conscience

sake with sad hearts left friends and country and the graves of their kindred, exploring their way to the New World. In the last of these, he says:—

"To thee, O saintly White,
Patriarch of a wide-spreading family,
Remotest lands and unborn times shall turn,
Whether they would restore or build—to Thee,
As one who rightly taught how zeal should burn,
As one who drew from out Faith's holiest urn
The purest stream of patient Energy."

The following two sonnets are artistically conceived and executed in Wordsworth's ornate and imaginative style:—

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE.

Tax not the royal saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the architect who planned,
Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed scholars only, this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence!
Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more;
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

THE SAME.

What awful pérspective! while from our sight
With gradual stealth the lateral windows hide
Their portraitures, their stone-work glimmers, dyed
In the soft chequerings of a sleepy light.
Martyr, or king, or sainted eremite,

Whoe'er ye be, that thus—yourselves unseen—
Imbue your prison-bars with solemn sheen,
Shine on, until ye fade with coming night!—
But, from the arms of silence—list! oh, list!
The music bursteth into second life;
The notes luxuriate, every stone is kissed
By sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife;
Heart-thrilling strains, that cast before the eye
Of the devout, a veil of ecstasy!

In the sonnets dedicated to "Liberty and Order," we find one beginning "Blest statesman he," from which we have already quoted, and which, in a masterly way, pictures what a wise statesman ought to be; it inculcates both magnanimity and prudence; resolute undaunted courage in the discharge of duty, "tho' assaults run high;" and that he should be "prompt to move, but firm to wait," "Knowing, things rashly sought are rarely found," for

"Perilous is sweeping change, all chance unsound."

Of one of the ancient, honoured "Homes of England," he writes:—

Lowther! in thy majestic Pile are seen
Cathedral pomp and grace, in apt accord
With the baronial castle's sterner mien;
Union significant of God adored,
And charters won and guarded by the sword
Of ancient honour; whence that goodly state
Of Polity which wise men venerate,
And will *maintain*, if God his help afford.
Hourly the democratic torrent swells;
For airy promises and hopes suborned
The strength of backward-looking thoughts is scorned.
Fall if ye must, ye Towers and Pinnacles,
With what ye symbolize; authentic Story
Will say, Ye disappeared with England's Glory!

TO THOMAS CLARKSON, ON THE FINAL PASSING OF THE BILL FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE,

March, 1807.

Clarkson! it was an obstinate hill to climb:
How toilsome—nay, how dire—it was, by thee
Is known; by none, perhaps, so feelingly;
But thou, who, starting in thy fervent prime,
Didst first lead forth this pilgrimage sublime,
Hast heard the constant Voice its charge repeat,
Which, out of thy young heart's oracular seat,
First roused thee.—Oh, true yoke-fellow of Time
With unabating effort, see, the palm
Is won, and by all nations shall be worn!
The bloody writing is for ever torn;
And thou henceforth shalt have a good man's calm,
A great man's happiness; thy zeal shall find
Repose at length, firm friend of human kind!

The following sonnet was composed by the side of Grasmere Lake:—

Clouds, lingering yet, extend in solid bars
Through the gray west; and lo! these waters, steeled
By breezeless air to smoothest polish, yield
A vivid repetition of the stars;
Jove—Venus—and the ruddy crest of Mars,
Amid his fellows beauteously revealed
At happy distance from earth's groaning field,
Where ruthless mortals wage incessant wars.
Is it a mirror?—or the nether Sphere
Opening to view the abyss in which it feeds
Its own calm fires?—But list! a voice is near;
Great Pan himself low-whispering through the reeds,
"Be thankful, thou; for if unholy deeds
Ravage the world, tranquillity is here!"

The series upon the "Punishment of Death" is, to our thinking, argued out clearly, cogently, wisely and well;

but, we would have almost preferred the presentation of such a subject in prose. To John Peace, (February 23 1842) Wordsworth wrote about this series "I am glad that you concur in my view on the *Punishment of Death.* An outcry, as I expected, has been raised against me by weak-minded humanitarians."

The following sonnet was written regarding Lady Fitzgerald, when in her seventieth year. She was described to Wordsworth by Lady Beaumont:—

TO ——.

Such age how beautiful! O lady bright,
Whose mortal lineaments seem all refined
By favouring Nature and a saintly Mind
To something purer and more exquisite
Than flesh and blood; whene'er thou meet'st my sight,
When I behold thy blanched unwithered cheek,
Thy temples fringed with locks of gleaming white,
And head that droops because the soul is meek,
Thee with the welcome snowdrop I compare,
That child of winter, prompting thoughts that climb
From desolation towards the genial prime;
Or with the Moon conquering earth's misty air,
And filling more and more with crystal light
As pensive evening deepens into night.

One day, when Wordsworth was walking with his daughter Dora, from Townsend, Grasmere, across the vale, in the month of January (1835?), snow being on the ground, she called his attention to a bird's nest in the thick leafless hedge, half-filled with snow; and by this comfortless appearance, "without reference to any individual object," he says, was suggested a sonnet, the latter part of which, intensely real, looks very like some old, impassioned, half-forgotten yet haunting memory, and reminds us of his touchingly beautiful series of poems on "Lucy":—

Why art thou silent! Is thy love a plant
Of such weak fibre that the treacherous air
Of absence withers what was once so fair?
Is there no debt to pay, no boon to grant?
Yet have my thoughts for thee been vigilant—
(As would my deeds have been) with hourly care,
The mind's least generous wish a mendicant
For naught but what thy happiness could spare.
Speak—though this soft warm heart, once free to hold
A thousand tender pleasures, thine and mine,
Be left more desolate, more dreary cold
Than a forsaken bird's-nest filled with snow
'Mid its own bush of leafless eglantine—
Speak, that my torturing doubts their end may know!

The next sonnet, written on attaining the wished-for height called "Rest and be Thankful," at the head of Glencroe, contains a fine lesson for all:—

Doubling and doubling with laborious walk,
Who, that has gained at length the wished-for Height
This brief this simple wayside call can slight,
And rest not thankful? Whether cheered by talk
With some loved Friend, or by the unseen Hawk
Whistling to clouds and sky-born streams, that shine
At the sun's outbreak, as with light divine,
Ere they descend to nourish root and stalk
Of valley flowers. Nor, while the limbs repose,
Will we forget that, as the Fowl can keep
Absolute stillness, poised aloft in air,
And Fishes front, unmoved, the torrent's sweep,—
So may the Soul, through powers that Faith bestows,
Win rest, and ease, and peace, with bliss that Angels share.

In the sonnet beginning "Intent on gathering wool from hedge and brake," the great Poet-teacher of the Century says:—

"Can pomp and show allay one heart-born grief?
Pains which the World inflicts can she requite?

Not for an interval however brief;
The silent thoughts that search for steadfast light,
Love from her depths, and Duty in her might,
And Faith—these only yield secure relief."

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## CHAPTER IX.

TOWNEND COTTAGE, GRASMERE. POEMS. SCOTTISH TOUR OF 1803. MISS WORDSWORTH'S DIARY. POEMS SUGGESTED IN SCOTLAND.

Dove Cottage—"The Green Linnet"—"To the Small Celandine"—"Lines on the Expected Invasion"—"Yew Trees"—Pedestrian Excursions—Tour in Scotland in 1803—Miss Wordsworth's Diary—Steam Engine—Potato Blossoms—A Birch Tree—Loch Etive—Mull—View from Portnacroish—Poems on "Burns"—"Ellen Irwin"—"Sweet Highland Girl"—Highland Character—"The Solitary Reaper"—"Glen Almain"—"Stepping Westward"—"Rob Roy"—Visit to Walter Scott—"The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband"—"Yarrow Unvisited."

Townend Cottage, Grasmere, where Wordsworth came to reside with his sister, in the last days of last century, (on December 21st, 1799) and to which, in October, 1802, he brought home his bride, was sometimes called "Dove Cottage" from its having once been a public-house under the sign of the "Dove and Olive Bough." Wordsworth called it "the calmest fairest spot on earth," and rejoiced in having his only sister—the sister of his soul—with her "benign simplicity of life," there to reside with him, now that the old home of their parents had been long broken up and extinct.

Two yew-trees stood on the eastern side of the cottage, "breaking the glare of its white walls." Roses, jasmine and other climbing plants, embowered the little diamond-paned window of the principal room, on the ground-floor; and, upstairs, was a little drawing-room, or study, containing a recess filled with books. The useful fireplace

of this apartment, Wordsworth himself has described as his—

"Half-kitchen and half-parlour fire."

Above the sloping orchard ground, behind the cottage, some rough stone steps were cut in the rock, and led to an upper terrace where he built an arbour. The walk on this terrace was "shaded by apple-trees, hazel, laburnum, holly, laurel, and mountain-ash;" while, below it, was the cottage-well, around which clustered a profusion of large primroses, and many Christmas roses; while clumps of daffodils—which the poet and his sister had transplanted to adorn their garden ground—in turn, flourished luxuriantly among the rocks above, and on every side.

The hidden brook sang its quiet undersong, and the green linnet warbled in the orchard ground, sweetly described by Wordsworth in his poem "The Green Linnet," beginning—

"Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on thy head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather."

In the arbour he watched and described the "Redbreast chasing the Butterfly;" there, too, he wrote the lines "To the Small Celandine," or common pilewort, an early spring flower, bright and beautiful, which shuts and opens out according to the degree of light and the temperature of the air. This flower, strange to say, had not previously been noticed in English verse:—

"Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises;
Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;

Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story:
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little Celandine.

. . . . .

Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly unassuming Spirit;
Careless of thy neighbourhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane;—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee."

He, who could thus welcome and love the modest humble harbingers of Spring and derive comfort from them, tender and brave, could at the same time utter "soul-animating strains," such as "Lines on the Expected Invasion—1803," in which he invokes all parties, however much at variance with each other as to politics, at least to be united in patriotism:—

"Come ye—whate'er your creed—O waken all,
Whate'er your temper, at your Country's call;
Resolving (this a free-born Nation can)
To have one soul and perish to a man,
Or save this honoured Land from every Lord
But British reason and the British sword."

And, in his poem "Yew Trees," what strange weird power and glamoury there is, in his highly imaginative picture of those trees at Borrowdale forming a temple, where a mysterious assemblage of ghostly shapes—Fear, Hope, Silence, Foresight, Death the Skeleton, and Time the Shadow, meet to worship, or to lie and listen to the mountain flood murmuring from Glaramara's inmost

caves! The striking passage was greatly admired by Charles Lamb:—

> "Those fraternal Four of Borrowdale,
> Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
> Huge trunks!—and each particular trunk a growth
> Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
> Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;
> Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
> That threaten the profane;—a pillared shade,
> Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
> By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
> Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
> Of boughs, as if for festal purpose decked
> With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes
> May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
> Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton,
> And Time the Shadow;—there to celebrate,
> As in a natural temple scattered o'er
> With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
> United worship; or in mute repose
> To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
> Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves."

Writing such poems, the first years of his married life were passed very happily at Townend, in the society of his young wife, their little children, and of his sister. Their manner of living is pleasingly pictured in the sonnets called "Personal Talk." Wordsworth liked to wander from his home at least once or twice a year; and, when he did so, even in his long pedestrian excursions, whether in the Lake district, or to Wales, or Scotland, his sister almost always accompanied him, and his wife also when she was able.

The year after his marriage, on August 14th, 1803, he, with his sister and Coleridge, set out on their memorable first tour to Scotland—a tour which produced some of the

finest lyrical poems that Wordsworth ever composed. They travelled mostly on foot, going up Nithsdale, visiting the house and grave of Burns at Dumfries, and proceeding thence to the Highlands.

At Lochlomond, Coleridge, feeling unwell, left the Wordsworths, and returned south.

They then visited the Trossachs, Killiecrankie, and many other places, the historical associations or natural beauties of which kindled his genius into song. On their return from the Highlands, they were delighted to meet Scott at Lasswade, visited Melrose with him, and accompanied him to Jedburgh.

Miss Wordsworth's diary of this tour is simply delightful. She possessed a fine eye for the beauties of nature, was a shrewd, keen observer of character, and expressed herself with admirable clearness, force, and precision. Many things which she has recorded throw much valuable light on her brother's poems,—her lucid narrative, with its explanations of circumstance, and environments, often heightening their effect.

Coleridge, their companion, was, as Wordsworth remarks, sometimes very happy in clothing an idea in words: Miss Wordsworth mentions—that, in passing a steam-engine, her brother having made some observation, to the effect that it was scarcely possible to divest oneself of the impression on seeing it, that it had life and volition; "Yes," replied Coleridge, "it is a giant with one idea."

Before quoting and illustrating some of the poems written on this tour, we here give one or two extracts from the pages of Miss Wordsworth's pleasant Diary, to which we shall again have occasion to refer.

On the way from Lochlomond to Loch Katrine, above Inversnaid, they saw a Highland clachan, surrounded by cultivated patches of ground, chiefly potatoes and corn,

and were particularly struck by the great beauty of the potato blossoms. The people were busy making hay, in the hollow places of the open vale, and all along the sides of the burns:—

"It was," says she, "a pretty sight altogether—men and women, dogs, the little running streams, with linen bleaching near them, and cheerful sunny hills and rocks on every side. We passed by one patch of potatoes that a florist might have been proud of; no carnation bed ever looked more gay than this square plot of ground on the waste common. The flowers were in very large bunches, and of an extraordinary size, and of every conceivable shade of colouring from snow-white to deep purple. It was pleasing in that place, where perhaps was never yet a flower cultivated by man for his own pleasure, to see these blossoms grow more gladly than elsewhere, making a summer garden near the mountain dwellings."

How poetical, too, is this fine description of a birch-tree which they saw!—

"It was yielding to the gust of the wind, with all its tender twigs; the sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water."

She accurately pictures the shores of Loch Etive, in all their moorish and rocky wildness. Wordsworth's poem written in that neighbourhood, we have already quoted. She speaks, too, of the island of Mull—the name of which they did not know at the time—as a high mountain, lying gem-like and soft in the sunshine, and seen over leagues of water. It was overcast with clouds, but, though of a terrestrial green, it seemed altogether aërial and visionary.

She also gives us a charming description of the view from Portnacroish, then only a small village consisting of a few huts, and a little inn by the side of Loch Linnhe—

an arm of the sea at the beginning of that series of Lochs which, connected together, runs north-east to Inverness and forms the Caledonian Canal:—

"Went a few steps from the (inn) door up the road, and turning aside into a field stood at the top of a low eminence, from which, looking down the loch to the sea through a long vista of hills and mountains, we beheld one of the most delightful prospects that, even when we dream of fairer worlds than this, it is possible for us to conceive in our hearts. A covering of clouds rested on the long range of the hills of Morven, mists floated very near to the water on their sides, and were slowly shifting about: yet the sky was clear, and the sea, from the reflection of the sky, of an ethereal or sapphire blue, which was intermingled in many places, and mostly by gentle gradations, with beds of bright dazzling sunshine; green islands lay on the calm water, islands far greener, for so it seemed, than the grass of other places; and, from their excessive beauty, their unearthly softness, and the great distance of many of them, they made us think of the islands of the blessed in the Vision of Mirza—a resemblance more striking from the long tract of mist which rested on the top of the steeps of Morven."

Reverting, now, to Dumfries:—At the grave of BURNS, only seven years after his death, Wordsworth wrote—

"Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius 'glinted' forth,
Rose like a star that touching earth,
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
The struggling heart, where be they now?—
Full soon the Aspirant of the plough,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave.

I mourned with thousands, but as one
More deeply grieved, for He was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How Verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Alas! where'er the current tends,
Regret pursues and with it blends,—
Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
By Skiddaw seen,—
Neighbours we were, and loving friends
We might have been;

True friends though diversely inclined;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibres are entwined,
Through Nature's skill,
May even by contraries be joined
More closely still.

The tear will start, and let it flow;
Thou 'poor inhabitant below,'
At this dread moment—even so—
Might we together
Have sat and talked where gowans blow,
Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed
Within my reach; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast!
But why go on?—
Oh! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
His grave grass-grown.

. . . . . .

Sighing I turned away; but ere
Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
Music that sorrow comes not near,
A ritual hymn,
Chaunted in love that casts out fear
By Seraphim."

In "THOUGHTS suggested the following day on the banks of Nith," near the Poet's Residence he pays this true meed to the greatest *Song-writer* the world has ever seen:—

"Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen:
He rules 'mid winter snows, and when
Bees fill their hives;
Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives:"

and he, thus charitably concludes the poem:—

"Sweet Mercy! to the gates of Heaven
This Minstrel lead, his sins forgiven;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven
With vain endeavour,
And memory of Earth's bitter leaven,
Effaced for ever.

But why to Him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail heart the purest share
With all that live?—
The best of what we do and are,
Just God, forgive!"

In a letter, written to his friend Professor Henry Reed of Philadelphia, from Rydal Mount on Dec. 23, 1839, when referring to the last verse, which he had only recently added, after an interval of thirty-six years, he says:—"The more I reflect upon this last exclamation, the more I feel (and perhaps it may in some degree be the same with you) justified in attaching comparatively small importance to any literary monument that I may be enabled to leave behind. It is well, however, I am convinced, that men think otherwise in the earlier part

of their lives; and why it is so, is a point I need not touch upon in writing to you."

He, thus, concludes a poem addressed to the Sons of Burns:—

"His judgment with benignant ray
Shall guide, his fancy cheer, your way;
But ne'er to a seductive lay
Let faith be given;
Nor deem that 'light which leads astray,
Is light from heaven.'

Let no mean hope your souls enslave:
Be independent, generous, brave;
Your father such example gave,
And such revere:
But be admonished by his grave,
And think, and fear!"

The Kirtle is a river in the south of Scotland, on the banks of which, the tragic event, which is related in the following poem, took place. In order to avoid comparison with the simple old ballad form, Wordsworth purposely chose a new stanza resembling that of Bürger's "Leonora":—

ELLEN IRWIN, OR THE BRAES OF KIRTLE.

Fair Ellen Irwin, when she sate
Upon the braes of Kirtle,
Was lovely as a Grecian maid
Adorned with wreaths of myrtle;
Young Adam Bruce beside her lay,
And there did they beguile the day
With love and gentle speeches,
Beneath the budding beeches.

From many knights and many squires
The Bruce had been selected;
And Gordon, fairest of them all,
By Ellen was rejected.

Sad tidings to that noble youth!
For it may be proclaimed with truth,
If Bruce hath loved sincerely,
That Gordon loves as dearly.

But what is Gordon's beauteous face,
And what are Gordon's crosses,
To them who sit by Kirtle's braes,
Upon the verdant mosses?
Alas that ever he was born!
The Gordon, couched behind a thorn,
Sees them and their caressing;
Beholds them blest and blessing.

Proud Gordon cannot bear the thoughts
That through his brain are travelling,
And, starting up, to Bruce's heart
He launched a deadly javelin!
Fair Ellen saw it when it came,
And, stepping forth to meet the same,
Did with her body cover
The youth, her chosen lover.

And, falling into Bruce's arms,
Thus died the beauteous Ellen,
Thus, from the heart of her true-love,
The mortal spear repelling.
And Bruce, as soon as he had slain
The Gordon, sailed away to Spain;
And fought with rage incessant
Against the Moorish crescent.

But many days, and many months,
And many years ensuing,
This wretched knight did vainly seek
The death that he was wooing.
So coming his last help to crave,
Heart-broken, upon Ellen's grave
His body he extended,
And there his sorrow ended.

Now ye, who willingly have heard
The tale I have been telling,
May in Kirkonnel churchyard view
The grave of lovely Ellen:
By Ellen's side the Bruce is laid;
And, for the stone upon its head,
May no rude hand deface it,
And its forlorn HIC JACET!

Of the "Sweet Highland Girl," Miss Wordsworth writes in her Journal, under date August 28th, 1803:—

"When we were beginning to descend the hill towards Lochlomond, we overtook two girls, who told us we could not cross the ferry till evening, for the boat was gone with a number of people to church. One of the girls was exceedingly beautiful; and the figures of both of them, in gray plaids falling to their feet, their faces only being uncovered, excited our attention before we spoke to them; but they answered us so sweetly that we were quite delighted, at the same time that they stared at us with an innocent look of wonder. I think I never heard the English language sound more sweetly than from the mouth of the elder of these girls while she stood at the gate answering our inquiries, her face flushed with rain; her pronunciation was clear and distinct: without difficulty, yet slow, like that of a foreign speech. They told us we might sit in the ferry-house till the return of the boat, went in with us, and made a good fire as fast as possible to dry our wet clothes. We learnt that the taller was the sister of the ferryman, and had been left in charge of the house for the day, that the other was his wife's sister, and was come with his mother on a visit,—an old woman, who sat in a corner beside the cradle, nursing her little grandchild." . . The elder girl "moved with unusual activity which was chastened very delicately by a certain hesitation in her looks when she spoke, being able to understand us but imperfectly. They were both exceedingly desirous to get me what I wanted to make me comfortable." At dinner, "the manner in which they, and particularly the elder of the girls, performed everything, was perfectly graceful.

. . The hospitality we had met with at the two cottages and Mr. Macfarlane's gave us very favourable impressions on this our first entrance into the Highlands, and at this day the innocent merriment of the girls, with their kindness to us, and the beautiful figure and face of the elder, come to my mind whenever I think of the ferry-house and water-fall of Loch-lomond, and I never think of the two girls but the whole image of that romantic spot is before me, a living image, as it will be to my dying day. The following poem was written by William not long after our return from Scotland:"—

## TO A HIGHLAND GIRL.

(AT INVERSNAID, UPON LOCH LOMOND.)

Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower
Of beauty is thy earthly dower!
Twice seven consenting years have shed
Their utmost bounty on thy head:
And these gray rocks; this household lawn;
These trees, a veil just half withdrawn;
This fall of water, that doth make
A murmur near the silent Lake;
This little bay, a quiet road
That holds in shelter thy abode;
In truth together do ye seem
Like something fashioned in a dream;
Such forms as from their covert peep
When earthly cares are laid asleep!
Yet, dream and vision as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart:
God shield thee to thy latest years!
I neither know thee nor thy peers;
And yet my eyes are filled with tears.

With earnest feeling I shall pray
For thee when I am far away:
For never saw I mien, or face,
In which more plainly I could trace
Benignity and home-bred sense

Ripening in perfect innocence.
Here scattered like a random seed,
Remote from men, thou dost not need
The embarrassed look of shy distress,
And maidenly shamefacedness:
Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear
The freedom of a mountaineer.
A face with gladness overspread!
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred!
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays;
With no restraint, but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts, that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech:
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life!
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind,
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull
For thee, who art so beautiful?
Oh, happy pleasure! here to dwell
Beside thee in some healthy dell;
Adopt your homely ways, and dress,
A shepherd, thou a shepherdess!
But I could frame a wish for thee
More like a grave reality:
Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea: and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighbourhood.
What joy to hear thee, and to see!
Thy elder brother I would be,
Thy father, anything to thee!

Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place.

Joy have I had; and going hence
I bear away my recompense.
In spots like these it is we prize
Our memory, feel that she hath eyes:
Then, why should I be loth to stir?
I feel this place was made for her;
To give new pleasure like the past,
Continued long as life shall last.
Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,
Sweet Highland girl! from thee to part;
For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold,
As I do now, the Cabin small,
The Lake, the Bay, the Waterfall;
And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

In proof of the lasting impression the girl had produced on Wordsworth, he again introduces her, in his memorials of a tour on the Continent in 1820, as one of the "Three Cottage Girls;" and, long after, when approaching the end of his seventy-third year he still wrote of her as "a delightful creature" of whom he retained a most vivid remembrance, although he had neither seen nor heard of her during the long interval. We have often been struck with, and remarked on, the perfectly graceful carriage and manner, fine delicate tact, true hospitality and genuine inborn natural politeness of the Highland character. In short, when uncontaminated by shoals of vulgar tourists, both the women and men, respectful yet independent, are in truth Nature's own ladies and gentlemen. This, and many other fine traits of character, come directly from the old Clan System, which had much in common with the admirable civil and social arrangements of Patriarchal days.

"The Solitary Reaper," one of the most perfect of Wordsworth's poems, was probably suggested to him, as

he and his sister walked, in the neighbourhood of Loch Voil, between the Braes of Balquhidder and Strathyre. Such music will never cease to charm and haunt human hearts, and it is verily as touchingly sweet to-day, as it was seventy-seven years ago:—

## THE SOLITARY REAPER.

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts, and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
Oh, listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
Such thrilling voice was never heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again!

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—

I listened—motionless and still;
And as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

"Glen Almain, or the Narrow Glen," is a deep rocky gorge with continuous steep rocky and heathy hills rising nearly vertically from a thousand to twelve hundred feet above the sea level on either side. The bottom of the valley is mostly smooth and level; there is neither house nor tree in sight, and the brook flows quietly along through this cool, lonely, shady place. Wordsworth was greatly struck with its utter solitude, and, when he afterwards heard that it was fancied by some to contain the grave of Ossian, the last of all his race, pleased with the idea he wrote the poem beginning:—

"In this still place remote from men
Sleeps Ossian in the Narrow Glen."

When they were walking towards the head of Loch Katrine, on a pleasant track through coppice or open vale, a track that was neither path nor road but something between both—Benlomond and other mountains in view, the lake perfectly calm, the air sweet and mild, and the sun some time set—as they approached within a quarter of a mile of the ferryman's hut, where, some weeks before, they had been hospitably entertained, the track having now led them close to the shore of the calm lake, they met, in one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region, two neatly dressed women without hats, one of whom said to them by way of greeting, in a friendly soft tone of voice, "What, you are stepping westward?"

Miss Wordsworth adds—

"I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glow-

ing with the departed sun. William wrote the following poem long after, in remembrance of his feelings and mine:"—

## STEPPING WESTWARD.

"*What! you are stepping westward?*"—"*Yea.*"
'Twould be a *wildish* destiny,
If we, who thus together roam
In a strange land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of Chance:
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a Sky to lead him on?

The dewy ground was dark and cold;
Behind, all gloomy to behold;
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny:
I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound
Of something without place or bound;
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

The voice was soft, and she who spake
Was walking by her native Lake;
The salutation had to me
The very sound of courtesy:
Its power was felt; and while my eye
Was fixed upon the glowing sky,
The echo of the voice inwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of travelling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

Standing by Rob Roy's grave, Wordsworth, philosophically glancing into the causes of revolutions, recognizes the fact—that, at times, men of action, wise as brave, may seek and find their moral creed in the principles of things, and that, when laws, too false to guide or control, only puzzle

and blind, till distinctions that are plain and few are lost, then, a man looking within may conclude,

> "These find I graven on my heart:
> *That* tells me what to do."

"The history of Rob Roy," Wordsworth tells us, "is sufficiently known; his grave is near the head of Loch Katrine, in one of those small pinfold-like burial-grounds of neglected and desolate appearance, which the traveller meets with in the Highlands of Scotland."

In this poem—"Rob Roy's Grave"—he thus enunciates what goes on under the law of natural selection:—

> "'The creatures see of flood and field,
> And those that travel on the wind!
> With them no strife can last; they live
> In peace, and peace of mind.
>
> For why?—because the good old rule
> Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
> That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can.
>
> A lesson that is quickly learned,
> A signal this which all can see!
> Thus nothing here provokes the strong
> To wanton cruelty.
>
> All freakishness of mind is checked;
> He tamed, who foolishly aspires;
> While to the measure of his might
> Each fashions his desires.
>
> All kinds, and creatures, stand and fall
> By strength of prowess or of wit:
> 'Tis God's appointment who must sway,
> And who is to submit.
>
> Since, then, the rule of right is plain,
> And longest life is but a day;

To have my ends, maintain my rights,
I'll take the shortest way.'

And thus among these rocks he lived,
Through summer heat and winter snow:
The eagle, he was lord above,
And Rob was lord below."

Then, making due allowance for the difference of times and environment, he adds—

"I would not wrong thee, champion brave!
Would wrong thee nowhere; least of all
Here standing by thy grave.

For thou, although with some wild thoughts,
Wild Chieftain of a savage Clan!
Hadst this to boast of; thou didst love
The *liberty* of man.

And, had it been thy lot to live
With us who now behold the light,
Thou would'st have nobly stirred thyself,
And battled for the Right.

For thou wert still the poor man's stay,
The poor man's heart, the poor man's hand;
And all the oppressed, who wanted strength,
Had thine at their command.

Bear witness many a pensive sigh
Of thoughtful herdsman when he strays
Alone upon Loch Vool's[1] heights,
And by Loch Lomond's braes!

And, far and near, through vale and hill,
Are faces that attest the same;
The proud heart flashing through the eyes,
At sound of Rob Roy's name."

[1] Loch Voil.

After completing their tour in the Highlands, Wordsworth and his sister went to visit Scott. On the morning of the 17th September, having left their carriage at Rosslyn, they walked down the valley to Lasswade and arrived there before Mr. and Mrs. Scott had risen:—

"We were received," said Wordsworth to Lockhart, as recorded in the Life of Scott, "with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except perhaps that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote, and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel;' and the novelty of the manners, the clear picturesque descriptions, and the easy glowing energy of much of the verse, greatly delighted me."

As Sheriff of Selkirk, Scott was at this time travelling on the circuit; they visited Melrose Abbey together and afterwards dined at the inn there; then Scott readily found comfortable quarters for the Wordsworths at Jedburgh. The hostess to whom he commended them was as active and cheerful at seventy-three as if she had been seventeen, while her mate was a helpless charge rooted to his chair and sitting there with a vacant eye. The pair interested Wordsworth so much that he afterwards wrote the verses called "The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband," beginning "Age! twine thy brows with fresh spring flowers," in which he says

> "But dance! for under Jedborough tower,
> A matron dwells, who though she bears
> Our mortal complement of years,

Lives in the light of youthful glee,
And she will dance and sing with thee.

. . . . . .

I praise thee, matron! and thy due
Is praise; heroic praise, and true!
With admiration I behold
Thy gladness unsubdued and bold:
Thy looks, thy gestures, all present
The picture of a life well spent:
This do I see; and something more;
A strength unthought of heretofore!
Delighted am I for thy sake;
And yet a higher joy partake.
Our human nature throws away
Its second twilight, and looks gay;
A land of promise and of pride
Unfolding, wide as life is wide."

Admiring, as Wordsworth did, various poems the scenes of which are laid upon the banks of Yarrow, in particular, the exquisite Ballad of Hamilton, beginning—

"Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny Bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome Marrow!"

he was desirous of seeing the locality. Miss Wordsworth, in her journal, says

"Being so near the Yarrow when we were at Clovenford, we could not but think of the possibility of going thither, and debated concerning it, but came to the conclusion of reserving the pleasure for some future time; in consequence of which, after our return, William wrote this poem:"—

In the two last verses, there is a depth of philosophy which is capable of being applied in many directions:—

## YARROW UNVISITED.

From Stirling Castle we had seen
The mazy Forth unravelled;
Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,
And with the Tweed had travelled;
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my "*winsome Marrow*,"
"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow."

"Let Yarrow folk, *frae* Selkirk town,
Who have been buying, selling,
Go back to Yarrow, 'tis their own;
Each maiden to her dwelling!
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow!
But we will downwards with the Tweed,
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

"There's Gala Water, Leader Haughs,
Both lying right before us;
And Dryborough, where with chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus;
There's pleasant Teviotdale, a land
Made blithe with plough and harrow:
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

"What's Yarrow but a river bare,
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder."
—Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn;
My true love sighed for sorrow;
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

"Oh! green," said I, "are Yarrow's Holms,
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!

Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
But we will leave it growing.
O'er hilly path, and open strath,
We'll wander Scotland thorough;
But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the Dale of Yarrow.

"Let beeves and home-bred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake
Float double, swan and shadow!
We will not see them; will not go,
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;
Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

"Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it:
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
We'll keep them, winsome Marrow!
For when we're there, although 'tis fair,
'Twill be another Yarrow.

"If Care, with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly,—
Should we be loth to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy;
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny Holms of Yarrow!"

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## CHAPTER X.

SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT. POEMS WRITTEN AT THIS PERIOD. MRS. WORDSWORTH. THE PRELUDE. WALTER SCOTT. CAPTAIN JOHN WORDSWORTH. SORROW'S TEACHING.

Beaumont's Friendship—Landscape-gardening—Loughrigg Tarn—"To Dora" —"The Kitten and the Falling Leaves"—"The Longest Day"—"The Affliction of Margaret"—"To the Cuckoo"—"My Heart Leaps up"—"Binnorie"—"Daffodils"—Mrs. Wordsworth described—"Impromptu"—"The Waggoner"—"Ode to Duty"—"The Prelude" completed—"Fidelity"—Walter Scott visits Grasmere—Wordsworth on Dryden—"Vaudracour and Julia"—Letter on Wordsworth's Money Affairs—Captain John Wordsworth's Death—Wordsworth's Estimate of his Brother's Character —The Ministry of Sorrow—Christian Fortitude and Sympathy—"To a Skylark."

Soon after Wordsworth's return from Scotland, which, he says, "far surpassed our most sanguine expectations," he became acquainted with Sir George Beaumont, Baronet, a descendant of the Elizabethan dramatist, a man of refined taste, accomplished in literature and art, and, himself, a painter. Lady Beaumont was a gentlewoman of great sweetness and dignity. At their seat of Coleorton, in Leicestershire, Wordsworth was a frequent and always a welcome guest; and Sir George, a fine type of the old English gentleman, was ever a generous and admiring friend of the poet's. Wordsworth considered Beaumont's friendship as "among the blessings of his life."

To illustrate these traits of generosity and delicacy of feeling towards one whom at that time he did not know, except through his writings and by report, we may here mention, that, on Sir George learning from Coleridge that he and Wordsworth desired to live near each other for the benefit of intellectual intercourse and mutual assistance, in order to further their plan, he selected and purchased a beautiful site near Keswick (Applethwaite),

which, in August 1803, he presented to Wordsworth, whom as yet he had never seen; hoping thereby to contribute, as he said, "to the pleasure and improvement of the world," by stimulating the two friends to poetical exertions.

This plan, however, was not carried out, as Coleridge required to go abroad to the warmer climate of Sicily and Malta.

Wordsworth, in addition to being unwell at the time, was overpowered by the delicacy and nobleness of the act; and feeling unequal to the pleasure of writing such a letter as it called for, actually left the gift unacknowledged for eight weeks, when he, at length, in a kingly way, fully explained and apologized for the seeming discourtesy of his extraordinary delay.

It was of this princely gift and the giver, that Wordsworth wrote the sonnet entitled "At Applethwaite, near Keswick, 1804," beginning:—

> "Beaumont! it was thy wish that I should rear
> A seemly cottage in that sunny Dell,
> On favoured ground thy gift, where I might dwell
> In neighbourhood with one to me most dear,"

that free scope might thus be given to work out their high calling; and, still addressing "honoured Beaumont," he adds—that, whether this boon be granted them or not,

> "Old Skiddaw will look down upon the spot
> With pride, the Muses love it evermore."

The Poet afterwards settled this property on his beloved daughter Dora.

Wordsworth's taste and skill as a landscape-gardener were called into practical requisition by Sir George Beaumont, who consulted him as to the laying out of the gar-

dens and grounds of Coleorton. This led to his writing several long letters to Sir George, which are really essays on landscape-gardening, treating it as a liberal art, assisting Nature to evolve beauty and harmony for the joy of living creatures.

There was a lovely spot near the south-west of Grasmere Lake, on the circular Tarn at Loughrigg, "round, clear, and bright as heaven," where Sir George at one time purposed to build a cottage abode for himself, and thus become a near neighbour of Wordsworth's. However, through the local jealousy of a proprietor, this plan fell through; and the poet afterwards alluding to it — in a letter to Sir George, written on July 20th, 1804, — says,

"That Loughrigg Tarn, beautiful pool of water as it is, is a perpetual mortification to me when I think that you and Lady Beaumont were so near having a summer-nest there. This is so often talked over among us; and we always end the subject with a heigh ho! of regret."

The Tarn site was re-sold, and the purchase money placed at Wordsworth's disposal, who expended it in planting the beautiful yew-trees in Grasmere Churchyard which now shade the Poet's grave.

On being reminded that his daughter Dora was a month old, calling her a "frail feeble monthly," he (in 1804) addressed to her the thoughtful poem beginning,—

"Hast thou then survived—
Mild offspring of infirm humanity
Meek Infant! among all forlornest things
The most forlorn—one life of that bright star
The second glory of the Heavens?"

Shortly afterwards, during the same year, she inspired that exquisite sportive poem—"The Kitten and the Falling Leaves." In it, he calls Dora, Laura. The kitten

continued to leap up, catching the leaves as they fell from an elder-bush which overhung the wall near the cottage:—

## THE KITTEN AND THE FALLING LEAVES.

That way look, my Infant, lo!
What a pretty baby show!
See the kitten on the wall,
Sporting with the leaves that fall,
Withered leaves—one—two—and three—
From the lofty elder-tree!
Through the calm and frosty air
Of this morning bright and fair,
Eddying round and round they sink
Softly, slowly: one might think,
From the motions that are made,
Every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or faery hither tending,—
To this lower world descending,
Each invisible and mute,
In his wavering parachute.
——But the kitten, how she starts,
Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts!
First at one, and then its fellow,
Just as light and just as yellow;
There are many now—now one—
Now they stop; and there are none:
What intenseness of desire
In her upward eye of fire!
With a tiger-leap half-way
Now she meets the coming prey,
Lets it go as fast, and then
Has it in her power again:
Now she works with three or four
Like an Indian conjuror;
Quick as he in feats of art,
Far beyond in joy of heart.
Were her antics played in the eye

Of a thousand standers-by,
Clapping hands with shout and stare,
What would little tabby care
For the plaudits of the crowd?
Over happy to be proud,
Over wealthy in the treasure
Of her own exceeding pleasure!

'Tis a pretty baby-treat,
Nor, I deem, for me unmeet;
Here, for neither Babe nor me,
Other playmate can I see.
Of the countless living things,
That with stir of feet and wings,
(In the sun or under shade,
Upon bough or grassy blade)
And with busy revellings,
Chirp and song, and murmurings,
Made this orchard's narrow space,
And this vale so blithe a place;
Multitudes are swept away
Never more to breathe the day:
Some are sleeping; some in bands
Travelled into distant lands;
Others slunk to moor and wood,
Far from human neighbourhood;
And, among the kinds that keep
With us closer fellowship,
With us openly abide,
All have laid their mirth aside.

Where is he that giddy sprite,
Blue-cap, with his colours bright,
Who was blest as bird could be,
Feeding in the apple-tree;
Made such wanton spoil and rout,
Turning blossoms inside out;
Hung—with head towards the ground—
Fluttered, perched, into a round

Bound himself, and then unbound;
Lithest, gaudiest harlequin!
Prettiest tumbler ever seen!
Light of heart, and light of limb,
What is now become of him?
Lambs that through the mountains went
Frisking, bleating merriment,
When the year was in its prime,
They are sobered by this time.
If you look to vale or hill,
If you listen, all is still,
Save a little neighbouring rill,
That from out the rocky ground
Strikes a solitary sound.
Vainly glitters hill and plain,
And the air is calm in vain;
Vainly morning spreads the lure
Of a sky serene and pure;
Creature none can she decoy
Into open sign of joy:
Is it that they have a fear
Of the dreary season near?
Or that other pleasures be
Sweeter even than gaiety?

Yet, whate'er enjoyments dwell
In the impenetrable cell
Of the silent heart which Nature
Furnishes to every creature;
Whatsoe'er we feel and know
Too sedate for outward show,
Such a light of gladness breaks,
Pretty kitten! from thy freaks,—
Spreads with such a living grace
O'er my little Laura's face;
Yes, the sight so stirs and charms
Thee, Baby, laughing in my arms,
That almost I could repine

That your transports are not mine,
That I do not wholly fare
Even as ye do, thoughtless pair!
And I will have my careless season
Spite of melancholy reason,
Will walk through life in such a way
That, when time brings on decay,
Now and then I may possess
Hours of perfect gladsomeness.
—Pleased by any random toy;
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye
Sharing in the ecstasy;
I would fare like that or this,
Find my wisdom in my bliss;
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take,
Even from things by sorrow wrought
Matter for a jocund thought,
Spite of care, and spite of grief,
To gambol with Life's falling Leaf.

To Dora, eleven years later, although we refer to it now, he also addressed the poem called "The Longest Day," beginning—"Let us quit the leafy arbour:" glad to see her sporting on the platform, happy as a linnet, or like the swallow wheeling on pinions swift and strong, he urges this moral pleading, as the "last forerunner of Goodnight!"—

"Summer ebbs;—each day that follows
Is a reflux from on high,
Tending to the darksome hollows
Where the frosts of winter lie.

"He who governs the creation,
In his providence, assigned
Such a gradual declination
To the life of human kind.

"Yet we mark it not;—fruits redden,
Fresh flowers blow, as flowers have blown,
And the heart is loth to deaden
Hopes that she so long hath known.

"Be thou wiser, youthful Maiden!
And when thy decline shall come,
Let not flowers, or boughs fruit-laden,
Hide the knowledge of thy doom.

"Now, even now, ere wrapped in slumber,
Fix thine eyes upon the sea
That absorbs time, space, and number;
Look towards Eternity!

. . . . .

"Duty, like a strict preceptor,
Sometimes frowns, or seems to frown;
Choose her thistle for thy sceptre,
While thy brow youth's roses crown.

"Grasp it,—if thou shrink and tremble,
Fairest damsel of the green,
Thou wilt lack the only symbol
That proclaims a genuine queen;

"And ensures those palms of honour
Which selected spirits wear,
Bending low before the Donor,
Lord of heaven's unchanging year!"

Then, when threatened with blindness, it is to his own darling Dora's hand he would turn, like another Œdipus, to guide his dark steps: and, later still, in "The Triad," Dora Wordsworth stands, along with Edith Southey, and Sara Coleridge, in imperishable beauty.

In 1804, Wordsworth wrote "The Affliction of Margaret" telling powerfully of a mother's constant and unwearied love for the absent, while her eye is evermore—

"Busy in the distance, shaping things,
Which make her heart beat quick."

It is a story that takes hold of one, and lingers in the heart. We quote the first two, and the last three verses:—

"Where art thou, my beloved son,
Where art thou, worse to me than dead?
Oh, find me, prosperous or undone!
Or, if the grave be now thy bed,
Why am I ignorant of the same,
That I may rest; and neither blame
Nor sorrow may attend thy name?

"Seven years, alas! to have received
No tidings of an only child;
To have despaired, and have believed,
And be for evermore beguiled;
Sometimes with thoughts of very bliss!
I catch at them and then I miss;
Was ever darkness like to this?

. . . . .

"I look for ghosts; but none will force
Their way to me: 'tis falsely said
That there was ever intercourse
Betwixt the living and the dead;
For, surely, then I should have sight
Of him I wait for day and night,
With love and longings infinite.

"My apprehensions come in crowds;
I dread the rustling of the grass;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass:
I question things and do not find
One that will answer to my mind;
And all the world appears unkind.

"Beyond participation lie
My troubles, and beyond relief:
If any chance to heave a sigh,
They pity me and not my grief.

Then come to me, my son, or send
Some tidings that my woes may end;
I have no other earthly friend!"

In contrast to the touching pathos of the last poem, how bright and hopeful are his lovely verses, of the same period!—

## TO THE CUCKOO.

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near.

Though babbling only, to the vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No Bird: but an invisible Thing,
A voice, a mystery.

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain

And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faëry place;
That is fit home for Thee!

How beautiful, too, are his allusions to the feelings of childhood and maturity in the well-known lines!—

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man:
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

In "The Seven Sisters, or The Solitude of Binnorie," he tells the tale of the seven fair Campbells who, preferring death to dishonour, rather than fall into the hands of an Irish rover-band which had landed and surprised the castle in their father's absence, plunged into the lake and all died together: the ballad closes thus:—

"The stream that flows out of the lake,
As through the glen it rambles,
Repeats a moan o'er moss and stone,
For those seven lovely Campbells.
Seven little Islands, green and bare,
Have risen from out the deep:
The fishers say, those sisters fair,
By fairies are all buried there,
And there together sleep.
Sing, mournfully, oh! mournfully
The solitude of Binnorie."

Of the origin of the poem on the "Daffodils" beginning "I wandered lonely as a cloud," Miss Wordsworth, in her Diary, writes:—

"April 15 (1804).—We set off after dinner from Eusemere, Mr. Clarkson's: wind furious. Lake (Ullswater) rough. When we were in the woods below Gowbarrow Park, we saw a few *Daffodils* close to the water side. As we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw there was a long belt of them along the shore. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them: some rested their heads on these stones as on a pillow: the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing."

Wordsworth made use of Miss Wordsworth's striking and beautiful prose description of the incident; but, in the last stanza, added the idea to which the whole tended —the one thought which constitutes the essence of the poetry, namely the wealth which the show had brought him, and which breathes life into the whole poem. In a letter to his friend Wrangham, Wordsworth tells of one who seeing a volume of his poems lying on a friend's mantelpiece, took it up, and remarked of this poem—"'Aye,' says he, 'a fine morsel this for the Reviewers.' When this was told me (for I was not present), I observed that there were *two lines* in that little poem which, if thoroughly felt, would annihilate nine-tenths of the reviews of the kingdom, as they would find no readers; the lines I alluded to were these:

> *"They flash upon that inward eye*
> *Which is the bliss of solitude."*

These two beautiful and thoughtful lines, which Wordsworth deemed the best in the poem, were composed by his wife; and of them he was justly proud:—

"I wandered lonely as a Cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden Daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

"Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

"The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:—
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company;
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

"For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the Daffodils."

We learn from Miss Fenwick's notes, dictated to her by Wordsworth, that the germ of that exquisite poem "She was a Phantom of delight"—composed at this time (1804), addressed by him to his wife, and which we have already given at the close of the seventh chapter—was *four lines* originally written as a part of the verses on the "Highland Girl" at Inversnaid, with whom he and his sister were so much struck. But he added—"Though beginning in this way, it was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious." De Quincey describes Mrs. Words-

worth, a few years after her marriage, as a tall young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features that he had ever beheld, and with such a frank air, and native goodness of manner, as at once to put a stranger at his ease with her. Her figure was good, though rather slender; her complexion fair, and blooming with an animated expression of health. Her eyes, as her husband paints her,

> "Like stars of twilight fair;
> Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
> But all things else about her drawn
> From May-time and the cheerful dawn."

After alluding to a slight obliquity of vision, which ought to have been displeasing, but which in point of fact was not so, De Quincey goes on to say—

"Indeed, all faults, had they been ten times more and greater, would have been swallowed up, or neutralized, by that supreme expression of her features, to the intense unity of which every lineament in the fixed parts, and every undulation in the moving parts, or play of her countenance, concurred—viz., a sunny benignity, a radiant gracefulness, such as in this world I never saw equalled or approached."

He also says, that—

"Though generally pronounced very plain, she exercised all the practical power and fascination of beauty, through the mere compensating charms of sweetness all but angelic; of simplicity the most entire; womanly self-respect, and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements."

Such is a fair picture of one who, along with his beloved sister, shared the poet's heart and home; and who, from first to last, for nearly fifty years, was ever his guardian angel.

The following impromptu, written by Wordsworth in

1804, effectively contrasts the attractions of the country with town life, and is sweet and pretty:—

The sun has long been set,
  The stars are out by twos and threes,
The little birds are piping yet
  Among the bushes and the trees;
There's a cuckoo, and one or two thrushes,
And a far-off wind that rushes,
And a sound of water that gushes,
And the cuckoo's sovereign cry
Fills all the hollow of the sky.
  Who would 'go parading'
In London, 'and masquerading,'
On such a night of June
With that beautiful soft half-moon,
And all these innocent blisses?
On such a night as this is!

"The Waggoner" reads like a Chaucerian Tale, the landscape background presenting a succession of vivid and truthful panoramic pictures of scenery; while the characters introduced are natural, simple, and homely. As has been said, by Paxton Hood, "The painter's art lies in perception, but the poet's in conception." It was written in 1805, but not published for fourteen years after, when, in 1819, it appeared with a Dedication to Charles Lamb.

In it, Wordsworth incidentally introduces "Benjamin," the waggoner, as passing Townend Cottage, without being tempted to enter it for a draught of ale; for,

"There where the Dove and Olive Bough,
Once hung, a Poet harbours now—
A simple water-drinking Bard;
Why need our Hero then (though frail
His best resolves) be on his guard?"

Here, there is now no danger; but, unfortunately, the

"Swan," with open door, is only a mile further on, as Benjamin to his cost knows only too well. The upshot of all is—

"And thus, and through distempered blood
On both sides, Benjamin the good,
The patient, and the tender-hearted,
Was from his team and waggon parted;
When duty of that day was o'er,
Laid down his whip—and served no more—
Nor could the waggon long survive,
Which Benjamin had ceased to drive:
It lingered on;—guide after guide
Ambitiously the office tried;
But each unmanageable hill
Called for *his* patience and *his* skill;—
And sure it is, that through this night,
And what the morning brought to light,
Two losses had we to sustain,
We lost both WAGGONER and WAIN!"

. . . . . .

"Then most of all, then far the most,
Do I regret what we have lost;
Am grieved for that *unhappy sin*
Which robbed us of good Benjamin;—
And of his stately Charge which none
Could keep alive when He was gone!"

This same year (1805), he wrote the "Ode to Duty," beginning "Stern Daughter of the voice of God!" in which he congratulates those glad hearts who fulfil theirs from love and kindly impulse; but he also invokes Duty to be ready to teach them to stand fast, and furnish strength according to need, if right impulses should totter, under the desire to stray into smoother walks. The poem consists of seven stanzas; we quote the two last:—

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;

Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live!"

He also now completed, in fourteen books, the *Prelude*, his mental autobiography from earliest days, intended as the Introduction to a great poem of which the "Excursion" forms a part. It was begun before he left Germany; six books, at various times, had been previously written; the seventh was begun in the spring of this year (1805), and the remainder of the MS. was finished before the end of June of the same year, and forwarded to his friend Coleridge, who was then in Malta for the restoration of his health.

Coleridge greatly admired the *Prelude*, and called it—

"An Orphic song indeed,
A song divine, of high and passionate thoughts
To their own music chanted!"

Wordsworth, however, laid the MS. of the "Prelude" aside in his desk, and it did not appear till after his death. One book of "The Recluse," intended as part of the third section of the same great Poem, to be so named, still remains in MS., unpublished, we know not why. The fol-

lowing short passages, quoted from the "Prelude," amply justify Coleridge's high commendation:—

"Whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be."

. . . . . .

"There is
One great society alone on earth:
The noble Living and the noble Dead.
Thine be such converse strong and sanative,
A ladder for thy spirit to re-ascend
To health and joy and pure contentedness."

. . . . . .

"Others, too,
There are among the walks of homely life
Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase;
Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:
Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy:
Words are but under-agents in their souls;
When they are grasping in their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them; this I speak
In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
For his own service; knoweth, loveth us,
When we are unregarded by the world."

And the last book of the "Prelude" concludes with the following lines on the Poet's high mission:—

"Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how:
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes

A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine."

The poem "Fidelity," an affecting tribute to the memory of a dog, was also written this year (1805). The poet's tender sympathies were always strongly manifested towards the animal creation. The young man who lost his life was Charles Gough, who had come to Paterdale for the sake of angling. While attempting to cross over Helvellyn to Grasmere, he slipped from a steep part of the rock where the ice was not thawed, and perished. The poem, by Sir Walter Scott, entitled "Helvellyn," relates to the same incident, of which he probably heard when he was there along with Wordsworth.

It was autumn, when Scott, accompanied by Sir Humphrey Davy, visited the poet at Grasmere, and on that occasion they climbed to the top of Helvellyn with their host. After an interval of more than thirty years, Wordsworth, looking back, alludes to this ascent in his "Musings at Aquapendente," to which place, with anxious hope, Sir Walter had been brought for the benefit of a genial climate, when disease already preyed heavily upon body and mind, although his sunk eye still kindled with its wonted fire, at the endearing mention of bards and minstrels :—

"His spirit
Had flown with mine to old Helvellyn's brow,
Where once together, in his day of strength,
We stood rejoicing, as if earth were free
From sorrow, like the sky above our heads."

Shortly after Scott's visit to Grasmere, on November

7th 1805, Wordsworth wrote him, from Patendale, a valuable critical letter on Dryden, whose works Scott had undertaken to edit, at the same time also giving him his own idea as to the duties of an editor.

While greatly admiring Dryden's talents and genius, and admitting a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear, Wordsworth did not think his language poetical, imaginative, or ennobling; and, to illustrate his meaning, he contrasts the versification of "Palamon and Arcite" with the language of Chaucer. He says that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and, in his translation from Virgil, whenever Virgil can be fairly said to have his eye upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage. In short, Wordsworth affirms that Dryden, although robust, "had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity."

In Wordsworth's "Vaudracour and Julia," an early and immature poem, we find the following passage descriptive of an infatuated lover, which shows that Wordsworth could have written effectively on such themes had he cared to do so:—

> "His present mind
> Was under fascination;—he beheld
> A vision, and adored the thing he saw.
> Arabian fiction never filled the world
> With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
> Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring;
> Life turned the meanest of her implements,
> Before his eyes, to price above all gold;
> The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine:
> Her chamber window did surpass in glory
> The portals of the dawn; all paradise
> Could, by the simple opening of a door,
> Let itself in upon him: pathways, walks,

Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank
Surcharged, within him,—overblest to move
Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world
To its dull round of ordinary cares;
A man too happy for mortality!"

This year (1805), a new edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared.

In order to place before the reader Wordsworth's family history, in relation to money matters and his economical and business habits, we cannot do better than quote the following letter, written to Sir George H. Beaumont, Bart.:—

"Grasmere, Feb. 20, 1805.

"My dear Friend,—My father, who was an attorney of considerable eminence, died intestate when we were children; and the chief part of his personal property after his decease was expended in an unsuccessful attempt to compel the late Lord Lonsdale to pay a debt of about £5000,[1] to my father's estate. Enough, however, was scraped together to educate us all in different ways. I, the second son, was sent to college with a view to the profession of the church or law; into one of which I should have been forced by necessity, had not a friend left me £900. This bequest was from a young man with whom, though I call him friend, I had had but little connection; and the act was done entirely from a confidence on his part that I had powers and attainments which might be of use to mankind. This I have mentioned, because it was his due, and I thought the fact would give you pleasure. Upon the interest of the £900, £400 being laid out in annuity, with £200 deducted from the principal, and £100, a legacy to my sister, and £100 more which the *Lyrical Ballads* have brought me, my sister and I contrived to live seven years, nearly eight. Lord Lonsdale then died, and the present Lord Lowther paid

[1] The late Lord Londesborough coming to know that Wordsworth's father had £5000 lying in the bank, borrowed the whole sum, and then refused to repay it. This, we are informed, was the origin of the Lonsdale-debt to the Wordsworth family. A. J. S.

to my father's estate £8500. Of this sum I believe £1800 apiece will come to my sister and myself; at least, would have come: but £3000 was lent out to our poor brother,[1] I mean taken from the whole sum, which was about £1200 more than his share, which £1200 belonged to my sister and me. This £1200 we freely lent him; whether it was insured or no, I do not know; but I dare say it will prove to be the case; we did not, however, stipulate for its being insured. But you shall faithfully know all particulars as soon as I have learned them."[2]

To his brother Captain Wordsworth, we have already alluded, and in anticipation mentioned his sad untimely death, when the *Abergavenny* East Indiaman struck on the shambles of the Bill of Portland, on the 5th of February, 1805, through the carelessness of the pilot whom he had taken on board when setting sail.

His loss was a very severe shock to the whole family, by whom he was greatly beloved.

Of him, Coleridge once wrote to Miss Wordsworth:—

"Your brother John is one of you; a man who hath solitary usings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact, a swift instinct of truth and beauty: he interests me much."

A man of warm sympathies, he was pure and simple in his manners, and refined in his literary tastes. Wordsworth, writing of him to Sir George H. Beaumont from the house of mourning on the day the calamitous news reached them, says:—

"My poor sister, and my wife who loved him almost as we did (for he was one of the most amiable of men), are in miserable affliction, which I do all in my power to alleviate; but

[1] Captain John Wordsworth, who perished by shipwreck a short time before the date of this letter.

[2] *The Prose Works of Wm. Wordsworth*, edited by Dr. A. B. Grosart, vol. iii. pp. 234-5.

Heaven knows I want consolation myself. I can say nothing higher of my ever-dear brother, than that he was worthy of his sister, who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge: meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a poet in everything but words. . . I shall do all in my power to sustain my sister under her sorrow, which is, and long will be, bitter and poignant. We did not love him as a brother merely, but as a man of original mind, and an honour to all about him. Oh! dear friend, forgive me for talking thus. We have no tidings of Coleridge. I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart,—and his poor body cannot bear sorrow. He loved my brother, and he knows how we at Grasmere loved him."

To another friend, on March 16th, he wrote:—

"For myself, I feel that there is something cut out of my life which cannot be restored. I never thought of him but with hope and delight: we looked forward to the time, not distant, as we thought, when he would settle near us, when the task of his life would be over, and he would have nothing to do but reap his reward. By that time, I hoped also that the chief part of my labours would be executed, and that I should be able to show him that he had not placed a false confidence in me. I never wrote a line without a thought of its giving him pleasure. . . I have dwelt long, too long I fear, upon this subject, but I could not write to you upon anything else, till I had unburthened my heart. We have great consolations from the sources you allude to; but, alas! we have much yet to endure. Time only can give us regular tranquillity. We neither murmur nor repine, but sorrow we must; we should be senseless else."

In the poem, beginning "When to the attractions of the busy world," Wordsworth, on finding a path worn in the fir-grove by the feet of his sailor-brother, who had just left on his ill-fated voyage, pleasantly anticipates when he would again return to rest in Grasmere's happy

vale—a fond wish which, alas! was never to be realized. The poem concludes thus:—

"I love the fir-grove with a perfect love.
Thither do I withdraw when cloudless suns
Shine hot, or wind blows troublesome and strong:
And there I sit at evening, when the steep
Of Silver-how, and Grasmere's peaceful lake,
And one green island, gleam between the stems
Of the dark firs, a visionary scene!
And, while I gaze upon the spectacle
Of clouded splendour, on this dream-like sight
Of solemn loveliness, I think on thee,
My brother, and on all which thou hast lost.
Nor seldom, if I rightly guess, while thou,
Muttering the verses which I muttered first
Among the mountains, through the midnight watch
Art pacing thoughtfully the vessel's deck
In some far region, here, while o'er my head,
At every impulse of the moving breeze,
The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound,
Alone I tread this path;—for aught I know,
Timing my steps to thine: and, with a store
Of undistinguishable sympathies,
Mingling most earnest wishes for the day
When we, and others whom we love, shall meet
A second time in Grasmere's happy vale."

Of him, Wordsworth wrote "Elegiac Stanzas," "To the Daisy," and "Elegiac Verses." There is much, too, in the character of one of the "Brothers," in the poem of that name, which is drawn from his brother John: and, in "The Happy Warrior," we know, that although Wordsworth had certain outward traits of Lord Nelson before him, his mind's eye was filled, with the whole scope of his brother's noble life, when he penned that poem.

Wordsworth had, in France and elsewhere, frequently seen human misery, suffering, and sorrow, and sympathized

with them. But, hitherto, sorrow had been, as it were, outside: now—it had come directly and keenly home to himself; his character was to be ripened, and his poetry enriched by it. "Time and grief," says Wilton, "were to teach him, that this world is not all sunshine." Hitherto, sorrow had been far away, and to him was only "the still sad music of humanity." A change had now come over his whole field of vision, and everything wore a soberer hue—a more solemn tone. His spirit was elevated, deepened, broadened, and, in fact, humanized. In its utter prostrate helplessness, he was brought to feel the absolute need of that strength from above which nature cannot supply; and, thus, sorrow called forth his latent, yet living, Christian faith.

He does not yield to weak despairing lamentation, but manfully girds himself to gain, from sorest trials, "fortitude for himself, and increased sympathy and tenderness for others:"—

"Farewell, farewell, the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn."

In the midst of his sore troubles, looking beyond the shadow, Wordsworth sings this comforting song—

TO A SKY-LARK.

Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, Lark, is strong;
Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,

With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind!

I have walked through wildernesses dreary
And to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a Faery
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine;
Up with me, up with me, high and high
To thy banqueting-place in the sky.

Joyous as morning,
Thou art laughing and scorning;
Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
And, though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken Lark! thou would'st be loth
To be such a traveller as I.
Happy, happy Liver,
With a soul as strong as a mountain river
Pouring out praise to the almighty Giver,
Joy and jollity be with us both!

Alas! my journey, rugged and uneven,
Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind;
But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done.

END OF VOL. I.

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